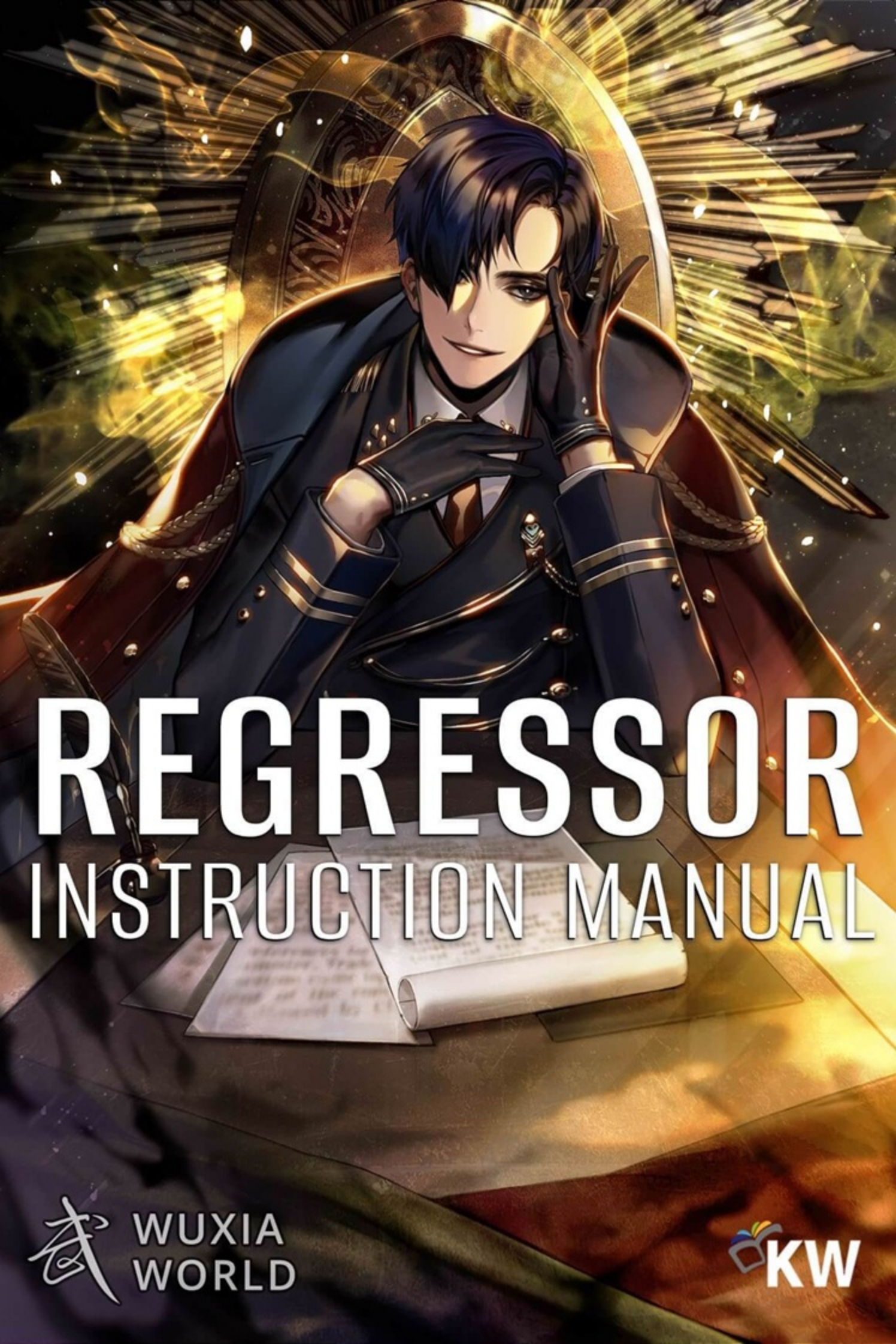
REGRESSOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL
WUXIA WORLD
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REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

– 회귀자 사용설명서 –

- VOLUME 6 -

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[WUXIAWORLD]

CHAPTER 251
A QUICK-WITTED SWAN (1)

Even though Max and I shared an unexpected affection between father and son, we still completed the expedition. We acquired one mythic item, two legendary-ranked items, and high-quality epic-ranked items. Unfortunately, the Black Swan Guild took the shield instead of Park Deok-Gu, but if the Blue Guild had taken that as well, we would have felt guilty during our trip back.

'It's better this way.'

We could just create a shield for Park Deok-Gu. The guild was going to have a competent blacksmith and we had plenty of materials as well, but the important part was that we profited more than the Black Swan Guild.

Considering the fact that the key figures of the Blue Guild had contributed the most in completing this expedition, it was only right to distribute the items based on that, but since we were going to see each other often, it was better to be fair. That was even more applicable here, as a value couldn't be placed on the items the Blue Guild had acquired. We had acquired many things such as titles and items, but the things that stood out the most were the mythic-ranked weapon that Kim Hyun-Sung had obtained and the museum control system I had acquired. Everyone was focused on the mythic-ranked item, but the museum itself was the biggest achievement for me.

'The world is going to change.'

If my plan worked out, there would be a revolution.

'There's a lot I can do.'

The things previously impossible would become possible.

I wanted to return to Lindel as soon as possible so that I could start researching, but our return trip was slow. The expedition party's stamina had reached its limit, so I understood that the return trip was bound to take longer, but I wasn't anxious. Once we left this area, a carriage would come for us, and it wouldn't take long to reach

Lindel.

'It seems that everyone is in a good mood, anyway… '

The reason was kind of surprising, but it was thanks to the new guests who joined us and it was interesting that the trapped members were being friendly toward Max and me. I expected it, but they said Max had never persecuted them, and he was actually kind to them and had a lot of conversations with them. This was just my assumption, but I was sure Max was lonely because he had spent a lot of time by himself. The museum was his only friend and seeing that he was *really* obsessed with the place, he probably often took out his loneliness on the museum. However, that wasn't the only reason why the expedition party had accepted Max.

"*Kggggh…"*

"*Waaaah*…"

When we revealed his story, the party showed sympathy toward him.

"*Waaaaah…"*

The group, especially those crying with Park Deok-Gu in the middle, started to take care of Manager Max.

"And then…"

- I stayed in the museum…

"You must have been lonely…"

- K-Kind of, but I've gotten used to it… and there are a lot of things I can do in the museum.

"Hey, don't say anything. *Kgh*… If you're hyung-nim's son, then you're my son, too!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

- *Ah*… okay.

Of course, I didn't hide the fact that I became Max's guardian, as it was only a title and it didn't really change anything. I thought Jung Ha-Yan was going to be shocked,

but she seemed indifferent about it, and it was the same for Dialugia. She seemed worried that I might start neglecting Smartie, but I guess she thought it wouldn't be so bad if Smartie had a brother.

Max succeeded in going from being a traitor to the cutest member of the expedition party. In contrast to his body which seemed like a machine, his main body showed emotions and his outer appearance was also really cute.

'Dirty lookists.'

While I was quietly watching the excited group, we reached the area where carriages could enter. They had to have heard the news because I saw the Black Swan Guild's carriages waiting for us. Kim Ye-Ri and Hwang Jung-Yeon, who came here with the carriages, were sitting quietly on top of a carriage. I guess the rookies of the Blue Guild had work to do, as they weren't here and before I could raise my hand, I saw the kid quickly running toward us from afar. It was natural for her to react that way since she had been waiting for Kim Hyun-Sung, but seeing her run past me hurt my feelings.

'You're not a cute kid… '

I imagined Smartie eagerly waiting for my return.

I guess Hwang Jung-Yeon wasn't interested in my return because she ran toward Park Deok-Gu without greeting me and during all of this, Kim Ye-Ri pushed through the people and hugged Kim Hyun-Sung.

"*Rattle, rattle.*"

"Did you say something, oppa?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"It's nothing, Ha-Yan," I replied.

I felt anxious seeing them hugging for a long time. Kim Hyun-Sung was treating the kid as if she was his younger sister, but in my eyes, the kid looked like she wanted more than that. He just didn't notice it because he had the typical denseness of a main character.

"You should get on the carriage and rest, oppa," Jung Ha-Yan suggested.

“Yeah, I should. I used a lot of my mana in the management room, and I only slept for three hours,” I said.

“*Ahh…*”

“Are you hurt anywhere?”

“No, I’m fine, Miss Hee-Young,” I replied.

“You’ll be fine after a long rest,” she informed me.

As expected, Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young were the only ones who cared about me. I was about to get into the carriage while leaving behind the loud Park Deok-Gu and Kim Hyun-Sung, who looked as if he was getting kidnapped…

“You’re safe, Mr. Ki-Young.”

“*Ah*, Miss Ji-Hye.”

Lee Ji-Hye came out to greet her guild master. Jung Ha-Yan became a bit wary when she suddenly appeared, but seeing her talk to me indifferently caused Jung Ha-Yan to calm down a bit.

“*Oh my,* Miss Ha-Yan. It has been a while. It’s nice seeing you two still together,” she said.

“Hello, Miss J-Ji-Hye,” Jung Ha-Yan greeted.

“It has been a while since I’ve seen you as well, right Miss Hee-Young?” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“Yes, it’s been a while,” she replied.

The way she approached us in a friendly manner helped bring down our guard, but it was a surprise how she said that Jung Ha-Yan and I looked good together. She always complimented Jung Ha-Yan like that, but she delivered it in a more energetic way than usual.

‘I guess she heard the news… ’

She had to be here for official business, not for personal reasons.

'So, the Black Swan Guild has already received the news… '

When one of the ranged members left the dungeon first to return to Lindel and deliver the news, I was sure they didn't simply tell the other members to go out and greet us. I was certain they explained everything that had happened in the dungeon as well as our achievements. On top of that, I was sure they also explained how we captured it.

The Black Swan Guild was the most sensitive guild in Lindel when it came to information. The only reason why the busy Lee Ji-Hye came all the way out here was that her guild master, Park Yeon-Joo, had to have sent her a message. I knew she was quick-witted, but I had never imagined she would start working even before we returned to Lindel.

When I glanced over at Park Yeon-Joo, I saw her and Lee Ji-Hye exchanging glances.

'Ji-Hye noona is working hard.'

She was working desperately to establish her position within the guild. Anyway, it seemed like she was calculating her timing while enjoying her conversation with Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young. I thought it would be good to help her, so when I cleared my throat, she talked to me as if she had been waiting for it.

"*Ah!* Now that I think about it, there's something I need to tell you… It's important so I can't say it here… How about we return to Lindel while having some small talk? I prepared a carriage for us," Lee Ji-Hye suggested.

"I'm kind of tired…" I commented.

When I changed the subject, I saw Lee Ji-Hye glaring at me as if asking if I was really going to act this way. I couldn't help but smile. I only said it because I wanted to tease her, but after seeing her desperate expression, I guess she had made a promise.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung and our guild master will be there as well," she added.

"In that case… I'll be there as well, Miss Ji-Hye," I said.

Jung Ha-Yan looked like she was about to cry, but I had no choice because this could

be considered a summit. Park Yeon-Joo had to have told Kim Hyun-Sung the same thing because he stepped away from Kim Ye-Ri and was walking toward us. As such, it seemed like the female members of the Blue Guild disliked Park Yeon-Joo and Lee Ji-Hye, but the issue was more important than the hate they were receiving.

When I entered the carriage, I saw a luxurious interior and it was different from the carriage I had ridden on the way here. I understood their intention of wanting to give us special treatment as if we were important guests, but…

'They should know that they'll still get something out of us without doing this… '

The Blue Guild didn't complete this expedition alone. I guess they thought we were going to keep quiet after acquiring all the items.

'We're not that scummy.'

I may have been a bit unscrupulous a few times, but I wasn't scummy enough to backstab a comrade to whom I had entrusted my back.

Anyway, Kim Hyun-Sung and I took our seats inside the excessively large carriage. Park Yeon-Joo and Lee Ji-Hye also sat on the comfortable sofa. We started talking as we enjoyed the tea ceremony and when we became comfortable, Lee Ji-Hye started the conversation. I realized once again that she had gotten really used to this kind of situation and even though Park Yeon-Joo was doing all the talking, I couldn't deny the fact that my soulmate had created this comfortable atmosphere.

"Before I congratulate you on the successful expedition, I'd like to thank you for participating in this expedition, Mr. Hyun-Sung." Lee Ji-Hye started.

"It was nothing. We're actually more thankful because you gave us this offer. I'm embarrassed because the Blue Guild has benefited a lot more for us to receive your gratitude," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"It's because you contributed a lot. You and Mr. Ki-Young played a key role in capturing the dungeon, so in many ways, you deserve to own the sword and the ownership ceremony was already done, so there's no need to argue over it. But the… museum currently belongs to Mr. Ki-Young, right?" Park Yeon-Joo asked.

"Yes. I received the Manager title, and I'm Max's guardian as well," I replied.

My head started to hurt at the thought that there was going to be a dispute over the ownership of the museum. It may be fine to give a small portion of it to them, but if she said she wanted fifty percent, I would surely start a fight. However, when I heard what she said, I realized that there was no need for me to do that.

"By the way, we don't intend on claiming ownership of the museum."

Lee Ji-Hye noticed my concern and commented on it.

"As Ji-Hye mentioned, we have no intention of claiming ownership over what's yours. However, I ask that you should be somewhat considerate in the investment that you, Mr. Hyun-Sung, and the Blue Guild are going to take part in as well as provide a fair share," Park Yeon-Joo requested.

"*Hm…*"

She asked us to be *somewhat* considerate, but I was sure she wanted more. She was telling me to consider the fact that if it hadn't been for the Black Swan Guild, I wouldn't have become the owner of the museum. Honestly, they deserved to ask more than that because expeditions were done in groups. I was going to give the Black Swan Guild a fixed share, and I was also planning on making this a joint project. However, the fact that they moved fast kind of surprised me. They knew what I was planning and as I had mentioned before…

'They're really quick-witted.'

Only an idiot wouldn't have the same thought upon entering that museum.

"To be honest, I think it's too early to talk about business yet…" I started.

"Just tell it to us straight, Ki-Young oppa. We're curious to see if you're thinking about the same thing as us…" Lee Ji-Hye requested.

"There are two things I have in mind and one is collaborating with the Black Swan Guild. I somehow ended up having ownership of the museum, but if it hadn't been for the Black Swan Guild, it would have been impossible," I explained.

"That's a relief. If you don't mind, could you explain the ideas you had in mind?" Park Yeon-Joo asked.

“Of course. The first idea I had was operating the unranked dungeon, Rift Museum…”

I expected that kind of reaction from them.

“The second one is… creating a broadcasting station,” I added.

I noticed Lee Ji-Hye tightening her fists, and I was certain she was having the same thought as me.

‘Full control of the media.’

This was the moment when the very first broadcasting station was established in the Holy Empire.

CHAPTER 252
A QUICK-WITTED SWAN (2)

"So you're saying this kid Max has skills. Am I right, oppa?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Yeah. It's impossible to bring away the entire system inside the museum and I don't have the skills to mess with the core panels that make up the system. I'm only Rank 4, but who knows? It might change once I become Rank 1 or 2, but I honestly didn't have any interest in the other functions. The part that caught my attention from the start was the magic hologram," I explained.

"It's definitely… a technology that doesn't exist on this continent, so it's understandable. It would have caught my attention as well. After you fired up the press within Lindel, many guilds started to make their own research about the press… but I guess it's no use now. The press is—"

"No, I was thinking about asking for help from the guilds researching that field. As I said, Max has the skills, but commercializing it is a different story," I interrupted.

"Wouldn't that put you at a disadvantage if you receive help from other guilds?" she asked.

"Not really. It doesn't really matter if people discovered the technology involving the videos. But of course, the later they find out, the more beneficial it'll be for us. However, the important part is not the video itself, but where that video is being transmitted from…" I explained.

"*Ahh*, so the control tower is inside the museum," she said.

"Bingo. It basically means we're going to be doing all the censoring because this isn't like social media where we could communicate with each other. It may be possible to do that once our Max starts doing some research, but I don't really think it's necessary. There's nothing better than television when fooling the public. Even those with power also used this method a long time ago," I added.

"That's true. They would spread rumors about celebrities and pass a bill as fast as

possible. They would broadcast provocative shows to turn people into idiots and that's probably the reason why they referred to the public as beasts," Lee Ji-Hye chimed in.

"It's ridiculous, calling the public beasts when they're the customers who pay for the precious license fee," I said.

"That sounds even more disturbing," she commented.

"You're imagining it," I told her.

Maybe it was because the guild masters wanted us to talk more comfortably, but the guild masters left after they were done with their important discussion. Obviously, it wasn't because they were annoyed or uninterested. It was more like they trusted us. To be exact, the museum's control system didn't belong to the Blue Guild, but to me, so Kim Hyun-Sung naturally gave me full control.

'This is why I love you, Hyun-Sung.'

Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't an idiot. He knew better than anyone how much money this project was going to bring and how much influence it was going to have. However, the fact that he didn't talk to me about it separately showed that he wasn't a greedy person. No matter how much I thought about it, I really made the right choice when I picked him.

Our guild masters trusted us, which was the reason why we were talking right now. Lee Ji-Hye may not have full authority like me, but…

'She's still amazing.'

If an ordinary person with no power was sitting at a negotiation table like this one, it would be difficult for them to understand what was going on with the common knowledge they had. This was possible not only because Park Yeon-Joo trusted her, but because she was known to bring results.

When I drank my tea, I heard her talk.

"So, how much will you give us?"

"I'm not sure."

“I was given permission to not worry about the investment. Our guild master seemed like she wanted to be on the same boat as you no matter the cost and even the guild executives agreed with her… I’m sure I don’t need to tell you that the Black Swan Guild has high expectations for me, right, oppa?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“So you’re asking me to help you save face. Am I right, noona?” I asked.

“It’s basically because I think I deserve it. I did everything they asked me to do and even though I have fallen for you, if you abandon me, I think I’ll feel quite sad. But you’ll obviously have more to gain if I gain more authority, so we should help each other out,” she replied.

“Wow… You’re not wrong, but you should speak facts. I’m not the only one who benefited so far. You used my name several times too, noona… To be exact, we have been helping each other out, but you’re talking as if you’re the only one who made sacrifices. I’m kind of disappointed…” I explained.

“*Geez*, oppa…”

“You know that acting cute doesn’t work on me, noona,” I pointed out.

“I knew that. I was just clutching at straws. So, what are you going to do? Stop teasing me and decide.” She urged.

“*Ahem*…”

She looked anxious. Rather than thinking about failing to obtain what she wanted, it felt like she was testing me on just how much I valued her, and I obviously wasn’t planning on treating Lee Ji-Hye poorly. Aside from the fact that I had a connection within the Black Swan Guild, it would be really beneficial for me to keep her as an ally.

“Do whatever you want, noona,” I told her.

It was a line I wanted to use at least once.

“Really?”

“Of course I want you to be considerate about it,” I added.

“Naturally. I’ll call it three percent higher than what the guild expects,” she said.

“So how much is that?” I questioned.

“Five percent?” she answered.

“*Hm…*”

“Is that too high?” she asked.

“It’s the opposite. It’s too low. The Black Swan Guild did participate in the dungeon capture… Let’s add ten percent and make it thirteen percent in total,” I answered.

“Is that really okay?” she questioned.

“Yeah, I have been feeling pretty guilty about it. I’ll get a stomach ache if I keep it all to myself. It’s better to be safe and share it fairly. If I keep it all to myself, some beast-like guy who’s all about reformation may pop out from nowhere,” I explained.

“Your description is kind of strange, but I understand what you’re saying. Since you have been taking care of us, I’ll make sure to increase our investment. And regarding the dungeon…” Lee Ji-Hye paused.

“*Ahh*.”

“Even though the museum control system is my personal achievement, I can’t say the same about the museum itself since we captured the dungeon together. I wouldn’t have acquired it if it hadn’t been for the Black Swan Guild,” I informed her.

I honestly considered the museum as mine, but I couldn’t help but be conscious of my allies. In this kind of relationship, even the smallest issue could become a big issue, so it was better to give them what they wanted.

‘The control system belongs to me anyway.’

Even if we split a large boat in half, the boat’s steering wheel still belonged to me.

“Then, we’ll take a bigger portion of the Rift Museum’s remodeling cost. It’ll cost a lot of gold since we have to destroy the partitions,” she offered.

“Of course, it’ll cost a lot. It’s the first dungeon theme park to appear in this world, after all.” I pointed out.

“I think Kangwon Land[1] is more fitting than… a dungeon theme park,” she commented.

“Please don’t go around saying that to other people…” I requested.

“I won’t,” she answered.

“Anyway, I think that’s it for this conversation. Is that enough to help you save face?”

“Yes. It’s much more than what I expected,” she replied.

When I glanced over at Lee Ji-Hye, the corner of her lips was up, but she looked like she was trying to suppress her laughter.

‘Maybe she’s in a good mood.’

I didn’t know if she was happy because she saved face or because of the kindness I showed her, but personally, I think it was closer to the latter. She tried to maintain her usual expression, but I guess she couldn’t hide her smile.

‘I have never seen her with that kind of expression.’

Maybe it was because the system called us soulmates, but even though I hadn’t spent a lot of time with her, I still noticed many different things about her.

‘Maybe she and I shared a connection in my past life.’

I was only able to think about the useless thought for a moment because Lee Ji-Hye came closer to me.

“Why are you approaching me like that?” I asked.

“Who knows?” she replied.

“Don’t come too close to me, noona. There’s an eye that has been following me around. I don’t think I can see it right now, but I don’t know when it’s going to appear,” I warned her.

“An eye?” she asked.

“Yeah, something like that. I think we’re arriving soon, anyway. It’s not enough time for me to spend a passionate moment with my Ji-Hye,” I answered.

“You’re right. We talked so much that we’re already so close to Lindel. We should have spent some quality time since we haven’t been able to get some alone time for quite some time now.” Lee Ji-Hye agreed.

“Talking about work is spending quality time with you, noona. And about returning to Earth—” I added.

“Gossiping is the most fun,” she interrupted.

“I agree. Anyway, I’ll see you next time. Actually, I guess we’ll be seeing each other more often because of the museum. You’re going to be in charge of it, right, noona?” I asked.

“I’m not sure. The guild has some restraints against influence, but it’s likely that I’ll be in charge of it. After all, I was the key figure in this agreement, so I guess I’ll see you tomorrow. Since it might disappoint Miss Ha-Yan, I won’t come out to greet you,” she informed me.

“Alright…”

When I exited the large carriage after it stopped, I saw Ahn Ki-Mo and Sun Hee-Young saying their goodbyes to the Black Swan Guild members, and they weren’t the only ones doing so. Dialugia was awkwardly shaking hands with the others, while Park Deok-Gu was being surrounded by women. It felt like it would take a long time since there were so many people, but someone suddenly came up to me and gave me a gift.

“*Uh*… thank you very much for what you did during the expedition.”

Jung Ha-Yan ran toward me when she saw us, but the woman who gave me the gift got inside the carriage before Jung Ha-Yan could reach us. I couldn’t remember helping her, but I guess she thought I had helped her. It was a bit unfortunate that I couldn’t check her unique habit, but I felt kind of good about myself.

‘You still got it, Lee Ki-Young.’

It wasn’t as much as Park Deok-Gu or Kim Hyun-Sung, but overall, I still had women coming up to me.

Anyway, I waved my hand until I couldn’t see the Black Swan Guilds’ carriages, and when we returned home. Everyone had already become comfortable with their surroundings, but there was one person who still hadn't fully adapted.

“Come here, Mr. Max,” I called him.

- Okay…

It was his first time being in the outside world and it had to have been interesting because even after arriving in Lindel, he was still looking around. When I extended my hand out, he grabbed it and that was when I heard a loud voice.

“Dialuria!”

When I saw Dialugia shouting while crying, I knew very well who was running toward us.

“Smartie!”

Our daughter, who had been earnestly waiting for me, came out to greet us. She looked like she had grown up a bit, but she still looked cute when she came running on all fours. Obviously, she didn’t choose to have a touching reunion with her mother, and seeing her pass by her crying mother broke my heart a bit. When I opened my arms as if I didn’t have any choice, I saw Smartie changing her direction.

“*Huh*?”

And the next scene I saw was extremely unrealistic…

- *Ahhh!*

Smartie headbutted Max’s chest with everything she had.

“*Kyaaaaaaaaaaah!*”

[Checking the Unique Habit of the Legendary-Ranked Named Monster, Black Dragon Dialuria.]

[A twisted and dangerous affection in the dark]

[#Mom came back too][#Who's he?][#Who cares? Time to tackle][#Success]

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1. Kangwon Land is a South Korean casino and resort company based in Gangwon Province, South Korea ☜

CHAPTER 253
THERE ARE NO BAD DRAGONS IN THE WORLD (1)

'What's this?'

It happened so suddenly that I couldn't move, and I also didn't know how to respond to it. I guess Smartie was being considerate because she didn't attack Max with her horns, but Max looked like he was in pain. As if time had stopped, I saw a spiteful Smartie and Max with his eyes closed. Naturally, his body started rolling away.

"*Kyaaaaaaaaaaah!*"

It was amusing to see Smartie snort as if she was telling Max to not underestimate her before maintaining a dignified pose. The saying that making yourself look big would make you look intimidating seemed like it applied to dragons as well as she stood on her two feet and assumed a firm posture.

"*Kyah! Pant, pant!*"

Smartie wagged her tail afterward and it was funny how I was contemplating whether I should pat her or not. When I was about to say something, I heard Dialugia's scream.

"Di! Ah! Luria!"

When considering Dialugia's love for Smartie, I was worried that she was going to start something by saying, *"Why would you discourage my daughter like that?"* but that didn't happen. Rather, Dialugia's eyes were filled with shock and anger.

This wasn't the first time that Smartie acted in an unpredictable way, but this was the first time she acted so aggressively, so Dialugia thought she had to fix that.

I left Smartie to Dialugia and started running toward Max. He held his chest as if he wasn't used to pain and after touching his chest, he pulled himself closer to me with

a shocked look on his face.

“Mr. Max, are you okay?” I asked.

“C-CEO Lee…” he muttered.

He realized that he was the safest with me.

“*Kyaaaaaaah!*”

Obviously, Smartie started screeching when she saw us.

“Dialuria! What did you do just now?” Dialugia asked.

“*Kyah!*”

“What’s with that attitude? Are you saying you didn’t do anything wrong?” she questioned.

“*Kyaaah!*”

“Every time…”

“*Kyaaaaaaah!*”

“Didn’t I tell you before that you can’t act like that? How dare you look at your mother that way?!” she scolded.

“*Kyah!*”

“I’ve had enough!”

“*Kyah!*”

“I’m a dragon, too! A dragon!”

Seeing Smartie acting indifferently toward her mother was a sight to see. She continued snorting as if she was still worked up.

‘She really needs to be taught a lesson.’

Smartie definitely had to be taught a lesson and guiding her while she was still young was the right thing to do. She may be between rare and epic rank, but once she grew into legendary rank, her tackle wouldn't be an ordinary tackle anymore. It was the same with the situation just now. If Max had been an ordinary child, he would have been severely injured. They started off on the wrong foot, but I had to fix that attitude of hers, so I had no choice but to be serious with her.

When I spoke quietly, Smartie immediately turned her head. Dialugia had to be upset by her daughter's indifferent attitude to her, as she turned her head toward me as well.

"Dialuria."

"*Pant, pant.*"

"You know that what you did just now was wrong, right?" I asked.

"*Pant…*"

"Return to the nest right now. You're grounded. You're not allowed to play at all and I won't play with you until you have reflected on what you did. I also take back what I said about spending time together once I return from this expedition and going out together. No snacks either, so keep that in mind," I explained.

"*Kyah?*"

She looked surprised and when I didn't look her way, she started crying.

"*Kyaaah… Kyaaaaah…*"

Smartie looked as if her world was crumbling down and it was interesting that a dragon could actually make such a sad face. Seeing tears drop from her large eyes was cute, but I already knew I shouldn't fall for it. I wanted to look at her, but staying calm as much as possible was crucial.

"*Kyaaaaah! Kyaah. Kyaaah… Kyaaaaah…*"

If I had to translate, it sounded like she was apologizing, but that wasn't going to be enough.

'You have to be responsible for your actions.'

That was what I wanted to teach Smartie.

The expedition members asked Max if he was okay as they returned to the house, but the amusing part was that Jung Ha-Yan wore a serious expression.

'Maybe she realized it, too.'

Jung Ha-Yan looked as if she might walk the same path as Smartie if she caused trouble, and she probably had that thought because the scene just now was similar to what she had gone through.

'It could be a good thing.'

It felt like the potion I had injected in her while we were at the Cursed Shrine was starting to wear off and I even thought about doing it again, so this was a good opportunity.

'I don't have the time to take care of everyone one by one… '

Since Jung Ha-Yan had become a top-tier mage when her magic stat reached 98 points, she had to be warned, but the situation in front of me was the most important.

'I don't think she's going to cause trouble just yet.'

Jung Ha-Yan needed time to organize the new power she had acquired, so she should stay quiet for the time being. And she would *definitely* stay especially quiet after seeing what happened just now.

"*Kyah… kyaaaah…*"

- CEO Lee, I think…

"Don't worry about it, Mr. Max. That kind of attitude has to be fixed," I said.

- But she's crying so sadly…

"Kids her age are usually crafty. She'll need to think about her actions for a few days,"

I informed him.

- *Ah*… I see."

"*Kyaaaah…"*

Smartie was still crying.

'I have a lot of work that needs to be done.'

Disciplining my child was something I had been neglecting, so it would be best to do it properly this time.

Anyway, when I left the crying Smartie and returned to the Guild House, I saw the rookies I hadn't seen for quite a while. Yoo Ah-Young was hammering early in the morning, and she greeted me while covered in sweat. Lee Chang-Ryeol also greeted us while bowing and thanking us for our hard work. Even Han Sora, who was still avoiding Jung Ha-Yan, greeted us quietly. Thankfully, the rookies seemed like they weren't having any issues.

Moments later, our lovely regressor announced the end of the expedition and the party members started to rest in their own ways. But even though this was break time for us, that wasn't the case for the guild staff members. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that their work had only just begun. Team Leader Kim Mi-Young summoned guild staff members and moved around busily. And as the guild staff members' overseer, I obviously couldn't rest.

As soon as I sat down on a chair in the lobby, the tasks I had to take care of kept popping into my head.

'They said they were going to officially announce the seatholders of the Empire's Eight Seats… '

It couldn't be delayed any further.

'I also have to visit the black market in Castle Rock… '

I had to see if everything was operating smoothly.

'I have to conduct market research in the conflicting cities before starting a business

there… ’

I had to consider whether it would be okay to send goods to the Republic’s side or not.

‘I have to take care of the rookies as well… There’s also the schedule for black magic research… ’

There was more. I couldn’t lose my connection with the Vatican, so I had to spend time with Father Basel and with the noblewomen by having a tea party and gossiping with them. Aside from those, I had to learn how the museum’s control system works and discuss different businesses with various guilds, which meant I shouldn’t be sitting here like this.

‘I’ll take care of them one by one.’

I would probably leave some tasks to my competent staff, but there were things only I could do and even though I was happy about the fact that we had returned to the Guild House… it also meant there were new tasks waiting for me. As a result, I couldn’t think but ponder seriously that I might die young at this rate.

My head already felt like it was going to explode, but the nothing-to-do Park Deok-Gu was being loud as well.

“Hey, hyung-nim. How about us men take a long, hot bath together? Ki-Mo bro and the guild master bro said they’ll go too… *Ah*, Chang-Ryeol is going to join us as well! Max will join us, too!”

“We have private bathrooms, so what’s the point—”

“That’s different from this! We need to promote friendship by doing this! And that’s what the public baths are for! What else are you going to use it for? We need to do this to strengthen our teamwork! For teamwork!” Park Deok-Gu yelled.

“*Ugh*… I’ll join later so go on without me,” I told him.

“You have to be there no matter what!” he shouted once more.

“Alright, Deok-Gu.”

I wasn't sure where he had gotten that idea from, but he seemed really focused on taking a bath together. And it was the same for the female members because they were also getting ready to take a bath. If I were to take a guess, Hwang Jung-Yeon and Park Deok-Gu were probably behind all this.

"Miss Ha-Yan, please hurry," Hwang Jung-Yeon urged her.

"*Ah*… I-I'm… fine…" Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

"Don't be like that," she said.

Even Jung Ha-Yan was being dragged into it and even though she looked at me for help, I couldn't help her. The person that needed help more than her was Han Sora because she still trembled at the sight of Jung Ha-Yan. I was sure taking a bath together would be a horrifying experience for her.

'Maybe I should go.'

First of all, I had to take care of the task in front of me.

"Miss Kim Mi-Young," I called out.

"Yes, Sub Guild Master?"

'I would have long been six feet under if it weren't for her.'

"Were there any letters for me while I was away?" I asked.

"*Ah*, I was going to inform you about it. Father Basel sent about five letters. Sister Jessica and the Heresy Inquisitor Sister Helena sent three letters each. Lady Caitlyn also asked if you'll be able to attend the party. And Lady Marilyn sent exactly 144 letters. Aside from those, there were letters from other guilds and a letter without a sender…" she replied

'Lady Marilyn sent 144 letters?'

"A letter with no sender?" I asked.

"Yes. '*Keep your promise'* was all it said in the sender section," she answered.

'I wonder if it's the crazy bitch from the Republic.'

I forgot her name.

"That's a lot…" I commented.

"Yes. There are event invitations from Celia. Dawan also sent official invitations—there are too many for me to go over one by one. *Ah!* Miss Cha Hee-Ra asked that you contact her as soon as you arrive in Lindel," she added.

"*Ugh*… Please narrow it down to the ones you think are really important and organize my schedule. Please organize Mr. Hyun-Sung's schedule as well and make sure our destination doesn't overlap," I ordered.

"Got it," she replied.

"By the way, how old are your children now…"

"They started attending school recently. T-The education program provided by the guild is very satisfactory, but I thought it would be best if they played with other kids…" Kim Mi-Young explained.

"*Ahh*, that's understandable. That's even better. Please find out if the blond-haired child over there can… No, no, just tell them that he's my adopted son and get him ready for school right away," I added.

"Okay…"

"And… please work with the Black Swan Guild and take care of the marketing related to this expedition. It's important that we mention the title, 'Continental Guardian,' so please include that no matter what," I informed her.

"Okay, Sub Guild Master."

"Having you around makes things easier for me. I know I've said this before, but thank you very much," I said.

"It's nothing. I should be the one thanking you…"

"If there's anything you need, don't hesitate to tell me," I told her.

“It’s fine. I’m more than satisfied right now, Sub Guild Master,” she declined.

“I’ll be heading out now,” I said.

“Have a good day.”

If Kim Mi-Young decided to resign, it would be a massive problem for me, so I should look into raising her salary once again.

‘I feel lighter.’

Even though I still hadn’t started my work, I felt lighter. It was probably because I had taken off the heavy equipment and luggage, but the feeling wasn’t so bad.

To keep my promise to Park Deok-Gu, I entered the bath and started removing the remaining equipment I had on me. I was sure the guild staff members would collect them after I was done with my bath, so I took them off without worry.

‘I think it’s my first time at a public bath… ’

The Blue Guild had many amenities, but it felt like it was my first time using one of the many amenities.

After I took off my clothes, I heard Park Deok-Gu’s voice when I entered the steamy bath.

“Wow…”

“What?” I asked.

“Wooow…”

“What?” I asked again.

“You’re definitely the hyung-nim, alright!” he commented.

I had a hard time understanding the bullshit he was saying, but for some reason, I moved the towel to my waist.

CHAPTER 254
THERE ARE NO BAD DRAGONS IN THE WORLD (2)

"What's with the bath all of a sudden? It's a good idea, but it's so sudden," I said as I entered the bath and even though I outright complained, it wasn't so bad.

'It's actually nice… '

I had been using magic to wash up, but relaxing like this was completely different from using magic. The private bathrooms in our rooms were nice, but since this bathhouse was created for the executive members, it felt even better. When we were remodeling a long time ago, someone said something about the content of the water, so I guess the water had turned this into a relaxing bath.

'They said something about mineral water… '

Everyone had to be enjoying it because they were all smiles, but Kim Hyun-Sung and Ahn Ki-Mo especially looked relaxed.

'I'm surprised Hyun-Sung is here.'

I had never expected our lovely regressor to participate in Park Deok-Gu's plan because he seemed like the type who would avoid this kind of situation, but I guess it didn't matter to him.

'This guy… he must be confident… '

I wasn't the type to avoid a situation like this, especially when the Guild Master himself was here, but if Kim Hyun-Sung hadn't come here, I honestly wouldn't bother to go.

While I was thinking about something else after complaining, Park Deok-Gu answered me as if all this wasn't anything special.

“It’s really just for us to get acquainted. That’s it.”

“Acquainted?”

“Yeah, get acquainted. We haven’t spent time together since the rookies joined. All we did was have dinner together and a welcoming party. We’re closer because we have been together since the tutorial dungeon, but that’s not the case for the rookies. It’s the same for Chang-Ryeol as well!” he responded with an exclaim.

“That’s true,” I commented.

“We should have taken care of you better. The fact that we neglected the rookies and immediately left for the expedition is bothering me,” he confessed.

‘Our pig is so kind.’

It was something I had overlooked myself. Back then, he almost got isolated from the party, which was why he was bothered and worried that the rookies were going to fall behind.

‘I thought he didn’t think about those things… ’

I was thankful that he cared about them.

“That’s why I planned this out with Miss Jung-Yeon. *Ahem*. Usually, when you do group events, it’s difficult for people to decline them. We’ll become close by forcing ourselves to take baths together,” Park Deok-Gu explained.

“…”

“Since we’re here, I’ll say this much… We—men—aren’t having any issues, but the female members don’t seem close at all. Despite going on an expedition together, Ha-Yan noonim and Hee-Young noonim still seem like strangers… Even I feel awkward watching them,” he added.

“They definitely don’t seem close,” Kim Hyun-Sung chimed in.

“I knew our bro feels the same way! And Jo Hye-Jin noonim is always going around preaching the rules and principles that she may have ended up building a wall around herself, which makes it hard for others to socialize with her. And that kid, Ye-

Ri, isn't the talkative type either. I feel bad for saying this, but other than Miss Jung-Yeon, all the other female members seem egotistic…" he continued.

"*Aaahhh*…"

Now that I thought about it, what he said was true. It surprised me that he was taking care of his fiancee during all this, but I couldn't deny what he said. Out of the female members in the guild, Hwang Jung-Yeon was the most normal.

"*Ahem!* To add to this… that girl named Han Sora trembles every time she sees Ha-Yan noonim… Our blacksmith is in a better situation, but according to Miss Jung-Yeon, everything is still a complete mess. By the way, didn't you and Hyung-Sung bro ride in the Black Swan Guild's carriage on the way back?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Did something happen?" I asked.

"It would have been great if something did happen. But during that long ride—no one said anything," he answered.

"What?"

"I really felt like I was walking on eggshells! During the entire trip… Ye-Ri and Hye-Jin noonim had said a few things, but that was it. When they did talk, it was all about work so they never had any normal conversations! This is definitely not normal! Don't you think so? Ki-Mo bro? Ahn Ki-Mo bro!" he shouted.

"I agree. If I had the chance to escape, I would have done it. It wasn't a situation where I could just ignore and bear with it," Ahn Ki-Mo replied.

"That's right!" Park Deok-Gu strongly agreed.

"It would've been better if they fought. I tried to relieve the awkward atmosphere, but… it would've been better if I hadn't tried anything. I still can't forget their expression," Ahn Ki-Mo added.

I thought the atmosphere became awkward because Kim Hyun-Sung and I had ridden the Black Swan Guild's carriage, but I didn't bother telling them that. Naturally, Park Deok-Gu thought that this was his chance, so he excitedly continued.

"Say something, Chang-Ryeol!"

“I don’t really know much about the others,” Lee Chang-Ryeol replied.

“R-Right. Then, *uh!* How about telling us the relationship between Ah-Young and Sora?” he asked.

“They don’t really have a connection, so I can’t really describe it. If I were to use the words that Deok-Gu hyung-nim used earlier, it seems that they don’t really care about each other,” he answered.

“*Ahem*… I told you so! This is the current situation of the Blue Guild’s female members!” he screamed.

I was convinced.

“Well, this is really all I could do and I think it’s time for us to come up with a more fundamental solution. At this point, you and the bro should show off your powers… How about a pep rally? I’m definitely in. Everyone… say… something…”

Park Deok-Gu suddenly became quiet.

“Wow… yours is really big, Miss Ah-Young. How did you make it so big?”

‘Huh?’

I heard Hwang Jung-Yeon’s voice from beyond the wall, and we hadn’t noticed them so far because we were so focused on our conversation. Their voices were quiet, so it felt like we had to really focus to hear them, but for some reason, I could hear them loud and clear.

‘They really messed up the construction work… this… ’

We hired a decent company, but it seemed that they built this place without much effort. We had to take care of this issue. I wasn’t sure if the female members had heard our voices, but anyway, we kept hearing them from beyond the wall. I tried not to focus on their voices, but I unknowingly imbued my ears with mana.

“I-I’m not sure. It just happened that way…” Yoo Ah-Young replied.

“It’s no different from a lump of fat.”

"*Oh my,* that's not true, Ye-Ri. Look how pretty they are…"

"Not really. People said they don't like it big. Yeah. They definitely said that," Kim Ye-Ri said.

"If people like moderate sizes, then maybe Miss Ha-Yan and Miss Hee-Young's are…" Hwang Jung-Yeon paused.

"No. Miss Ha-Yan's are definitely above average and Miss Hee-Young… I think Miss Sora's size is the appropriate size. By the way, you have such a nice body, Miss Ha-Yan. You don't even have any fine hair."

"I-I'll be embarrassed if you keep looking at me…" Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

"*Ah*, I'm sorry."

I got up from my seat, afraid that they would start talking in detail. The male members were also surprised that they ran out of the bathhouse.

"I guess we were wrong. They seem… close."

We heard Ahn Ki-Mo's voice in the quiet room. Even the persistent Park Deok-Gu couldn't refute and simply lowered his head. I felt uncomfortable because it felt like we didn't finish our baths properly, but the bath did make me feel better. During all this, my heart broke when I saw Max struggling to dry his hair, so I grabbed his towel and helped him.

- Th-Thank you.

"No need to thank me. Do you want to drink something? Wait, can you even drink?" I asked.

- I can. I don't really need nutrients, but now that I'm outside the museum, I want to drink something.

"Here, drink some milk," I offered.

- Thank you.

"*Tsk*. How's your chest?" I asked.

- *O-Oh*, it's kind of throbbing, but I'm okay.

"She'll be your older sister, no, dragon, Mr. Max," I informed him.

- *Ah*…

It was funny how he was getting worried.

"You'll be busy starting tomorrow," I told him.

- Okay!

"You're going to go to school and the research has to be done as soon as possible. Do you understand what I'm saying?" I asked.

- *Ah*… yes, I understand, CEO Lee.

Now that I thought about it, I never gave him a room.

After I bowed to Kim Hyun-Sung and signaled that I was going to head out first, I exited with Max and I was surprised to see Dialugia first.

'Why is she here?'

Before I could greet her, she spoke up with a *really* embarrassed look. Even though she was talking, she looked as if she was trying to read my expression.

'What?'

Dialugia was supposed to be at the nest, so there was only one reason why she was here. Naturally, I got worried that Smartie may have caused trouble again.

She spoke, but what she said was completely different from what I had expected.

"*Um…"*

"What's wrong? Did Smartie…"

"*Ah!* No, it's nothing like that. It's not that, but…" she paused.

“Yes?” I asked.

“H-How about we forgive Dialuria now?”

“What?”

“I-I feel so bad for our Dialuria… I think we have punished her enough,” she added.

“What did you say?” I asked.

“Well… she looked like she was really looking forward to the outing you promised her… I think she has reflected enough, so… let’s…”

It hadn't even been three hours since Smartie tackled Max. Even though I knew I wasn’t doing a good job parenting, I had no choice but to ensure that I understood why Smartie was growing up like this.

“I think… it’s best if we forgive her now,” Dialugia said.

CHAPTER 255
THERE ARE NO BAD DRAGONS IN THE WORLD (3)

"You're not being serious, right?" I asked.

"S-She reflected a lot. Really…" Dialugia stuttered.

"We don't know whether she actually reflected on what she had done or she's just depressed because our plans went down the drain," I responded.

I had an idea about what happened at the nest, even though I wasn't there. At first, Dialugia agreed to the punishment I bestowed on Smartie, and I even recall her nodding when I told Smartie was grounded, but after returning to the nest, I was sure she eventually felt bad when Smartie kept crying with tears rolling down her face. Even I had to look away from Smartie when she started crying earlier, so Dialugia's feelings toward her crying daughter could easily be deduced. Seeing that Dialugia had come all the way here to see me, I knew what she told Smartie. Maybe…

'I'll talk to your father.'

Or…

'I'm sure he didn't mean it. Don't cry, Dialuria.'

If not those, then…

'I'll help you. Trust your mom.'

The situation may have been a bit different, but right now, Smartie was no different from a child lying in the middle of the market and throwing a tantrum until she got what she wanted. That worked before, so she probably thought it was going to work again.

'It did work… '

Dialugia was the type of parent who would give her daughter whatever she wanted every time she got on the floor and threw a tantrum, and I finally understood why Smartie was looking down on her mother.

“I didn’t actually mean it when I said she was grounded,” I told her.

“*Oh,* really?” she asked.

“Yes, but after seeing your response, I think we should continue it,” I added.

“I don’t understand what you’re saying…” she said.

“We need to teach Smartie that she can’t always get what she wants. I know very well that I’m not in the position to say anything to you, but up until now, our Smartie has been doing whatever she wanted. She has to know that throwing tantrums won’t always work,” I explained.

“I-I agree with you, but…”

“So you agree…” I pointed out.

“But… Our Dialuria seems like she has been really looking forward to going out together… You promised her before we left for the expedition. I know Dialuria better than anyone and she has reflected enough on her actions. How about you go and reason with her…” she responded.

“You’re too soft,” I commented.

“I’m sure you know that Dialuria likes her father very much,” Dialugia continued.

Of course, I knew that. I couldn’t even help but think that it could be dangerous whenever I looked at her habit.

I did feel bad, and when I looked at Dialugia quietly, she continued.

“I’m sure of it. It’s because you haven’t visited the nest since she was young and didn’t give her any love. You had been neglecting the child thirsty for her father’s love… Of course, what Dialuria did today is her fault, but I believe we have to provide some space so that the child has room to breathe.”

“Is that so? I’m asking because it seems like you just don’t want to see Smartie cry,” I asked.

“H-How dare you think of me that way?!” she shouted.

I guess I hit the mark because she started blushing, unlike her usual self. However, she wasn’t wrong. It was true that I left the parenting to Dialugia when I brought them here because I was so busy I couldn’t even sleep properly. At the time, seeing Smartie once a week was already too much and when I entered the training center, I couldn’t see her for over a month. I didn’t really have a say in this, however…

‘Dialugia is definitely the problem.’

Her unique habit was The Giving Tree, so I was sure she had poured all her love and attention toward Smartie. Even when I was with them, she treated her as if her daughter was her master. Dialugia felt like she had no life of her own, as her attention was solely on Smartie. I knew she had the heart of a noble mother, but Dialugia was overdoing it to the point that it was making her look bad. I thought letting her take care of herself first was the right thing to do, but the issue was I had no idea how to go about that.

‘Parenting is hard.’

I didn’t know where to start. I didn’t have a child back on Earth, and I never really took child-rearing lessons and learned theories about it. The only knowledge I had about parenting was from the show, *‘Our Children Has Changed,’* but I didn’t really enjoy watching it, and I was sure Dialugia also hadn’t learned anything about parenting.

‘We need an expert who can give us realistic advice.’

I had a lot on my plate, but there was nothing more important than Smartie’s growth, so I had no choice but to lower my voice.

“Return for now. I’ll visit tomorrow morning.”

“Are you saying that…”

“No, I’m not saying that I’m taking back the punishment I gave her… I think our family has to go through a proper diagnosis,” I replied.

“What?” Dialugia asked.

“Anyway, that’s all you need to know,” I told her.

I had no choice but to quickly write a letter, so I left the confused and curious Max behind.

* * *

The next morning.

I saw Dialugia and she seemed to be in a bad mood.

“So, you’re saying that… we’re going to consult an expert, right? I don’t really understand. We’re the ones raising our child, so why do we need someone else’s help? And our Dialuria is a dragon, not a human,” Dialugia complained.

“Well, I don’t really know if it’ll be effective, but I’m sure it won’t get any worse than the current situation. Whatever it is, advice from an experienced individual is always helpful,” I told her.

“That’s… true, but…”

“*Ah*… Did Smartie behave yesterday?” I asked.

“Yes. She fell asleep when I told her that her father was coming and she seemed really excited when I saw her this morning. By the way, has this expert raised many children?” she asked.

“No, not really. You can think of them as someone who had received specialized education in the subject. They’re not limited to just early childhood education, but they’re experts in other fields as well. Back on Earth, I was told they were a family therapist. And when they arrived here, they earned the title ‘Monster Behavior Analyst,’ and they have been helpful in many raids,” I answered.

“Dragons aren’t monsters.” Dialugia pointed out.

“Of course, I know that, but we should still look into it. Actually, I called them here because I’m trying to find a way to make this work,” I added.

As expected, Dialugia wasn't happy about all this, and it was probably because she was unsatisfied about receiving help from this so-called expert. Since things like psychotherapy didn't really exist here, I could understand her reaction.

'We belong to different races as well.'

Basically, she disliked this situation and she seemed uncomfortable with it as well.

My expectations also weren't that high because it seemed that dragons had their own different parenting method. In addition, the dragon race was far more intelligent than humans, so they couldn't really be called monsters.

'Smartie seems to be moving based on her instincts.'

I didn't have time, so I asked Lee Ji-Hye for help to quickly hire someone. Lee Ji-Hye was confident that they would be helpful, but I would have to see if that was really the case. Anyway, I had no choice but to expect even a little bit of help from this person.

'If we don't know it, we just need to learn.'

Keeping this to myself would only slow us down, so it was more realistic to get help from someone more knowledgeable than us.

While Dialugia and I were waiting at a place not too far from the nest, we saw someone walking toward us from afar. It was a nice-looking man.

"My name is Kang Hyun-Wook. Miss Lee Ji-Hye has introduced me…"

"*Ah*, yes. Nice to meet you. I'm Lee Ki-Young."

"I'm Dialugia."

"It's truly an honor to meet such famous people. I had never imagined we would meet like this… *Haha.* It's really amazing because you really never know what might happen in your life. Whenever I'm in the city, I would always look at this large and magnificent nest, but I didn't think I'd end up here," Kang Hyun-Wook explained.

"It's just money," I commented.

“I’m sure people like me can’t even imagine the amount. *Haha*. Anyway, I’m not sure if I’ll be helpful, but I’ll do my best,” he said.

“I look forward to working with you, Doc,” I said.

“You don’t need to call me that. Please call me Mr. Hyun-Wook, Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild,” he requested.

“*Ah*… Sure. Just call me Mr. Ki-Young, then,” I told him.

“*Haha*. Since it’s a bit awkward for me to call you that, I’ll call you Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” he said.

He was nicer than I thought. He didn’t seem that trustworthy when I first saw him, but after talking to him, he didn’t seem like such a bad guy.

‘I think he’ll be helpful… ’

Dialugia had to have felt the same way because she lowered her guard.

When we entered the nest together, he looked around as if it was interesting, but he had to have considered this as part of his work because he was maintaining a serious expression.

“So, what should we do, Mr. Hyun-Wook?” I asked.

“*Ah*, don’t worry about me. Just spend time with your daughter like how you usually spend time with her. I think it would be better for me to see what the problem is first,” he replied.

‘He seems like the real deal… ’

He was already writing something down in his unknown notebook. It did bother me, but because Smartie started running toward me, I actually forgot he was even here.

“*Pant, pant… Kyah! Kyaaaaaaa!*”

Dialugia approached Smartie first, but as usual, she ignored her mother, and the way she wagged her tail while trying to get hugged made me realize that she hadn’t reflected on yesterday’s incident at all.

“Dialuria.”

When I spoke in a low, soft voice; she started whining, making her look pretty cunning.

‘She’s more problematic than I thought… ’

I wanted to tell her to stop, but since someone else was watching, I had no choice but to show them how I usually acted around Smartie. When I looked at Dialugia as if to prove my point earlier, she looked worried, as she once again realized that our daughter hadn’t properly reflected on her actions and simply fooled her mother with her tears. However, I guess she was still happy to see Smartie being so excited because she took a step back and watched us from the side.

After eating, talking, and playing with her, I realized that a lot of time had passed and when the stuffed Smartie started to fall asleep, Trainer Kang Hyun-Wook approached me with a serious expression. I was curious about what he was going to say and that was when he bluntly laid down the facts. I was already aware of them all, but Dialugia seemed stupefied.

“The child is acting as if her mother doesn’t exist. To make things worse, it seems like she’s completely ignoring you.”

“*Ah*… well…”

“And it’s impressive how she only looks at her father,” Kang Hyun-Wook added.

It was an obvious fact, and it was important for us to know why she was acting that way.

“Is there a reason why?” I asked.

“There’s a reason behind every child’s actions, especially if they’re still mentally immature. I saw many problems and from my point of view, I think the biggest problem is that her parents don’t seem to be getting along,” he replied.

“What?” I asked.

“The fact that you two aren’t getting along isn’t the *real* issue—it’s the fact that you don’t seem interested in each other at all. It’s so obvious that even I and your

daughter noticed it. Did you know that during the past few hours, the conversation between you two lasted less than thirty seconds?"

"*Ah*…"

I had never realized that…

"I'm sorry to say this, but I think the root cause of your daughter's problem is her parents. I will never consider this type of family as normal," he commented.

The way he bluntly laid down the facts made Dialugia's face turn pale.

CHAPTER 256
THERE ARE NO BAD DRAGONS IN THE WORLD (4)

"W-What do you mean?" Dialugia asked.

"It's just like I said," Kang Hyun-Wook replied.

"*Ah…*"

Dialugia was shocked. She seemed to be having a difficult time accepting that she was the reason why her daughter had strayed from the right path. And I was sure she was having different thoughts about it.

'Even I knew why things turned out this way… '

This family wasn't created in a normal way. Dialugia and I didn't have anything in common, and we didn't really like each other. If anything, we were kind of uncomfortable around each other. Of course, I had already made up for our not-so-good first meeting through the enormous nest, as well as the warm, high-quality food. But even if I tried hard to forget about it, the impression I had gotten of her back then wouldn't disappear. Obviously, we hadn't really been making any physical contact, and we had never exchanged loving words as well. When I thought about how Smartie had been watching us the entire time, it could definitely be one of the factors that brought about her change.

After checking our expression, Dr. Kang Hyun-Wook was about to start talking again and even though she criticized me earlier by saying that we didn't need an expert, Dialugia was listening closely.

"Of course, I haven't completed my diagnosis just yet, but that's what I think. Your daughter…"

"You can call her Dialuria," I informed him.

“I’m sure you already know that Miss Dialuria is showing symptoms of excessive obsession over her father. I’ll have to watch her a bit more, but she’s showing early signs of the Electra complex and it’s likely that she has been influenced by your bad relationship with him,” he continued.

“*Ah…*”

“Usually, this kind of obsession is caused by the feeling of her not wanting to lose her father to her mother, but your case is kind of different. Moreover, it’s also a very rare case…” he paused.

“Please continue,” I requested.

“*Hm*, before I explain, I think it’ll be better to give you a bit of background. I’ve been told in advance that you don’t have enough time to devote yourself to your family,” he started.

“*Ah*… that’s right.”

“It’s only natural that you’re busy since you’re the most famous person in Lindel right now. But that is the reason why you have been spending less time with your daughter, and I’m sure there isn’t much you can do about it. I think Miss Dialuria believes that the reason why her parents aren’t spending a lot of time with her is because of her mother, but of course, the actual cause is a bit different…” he added.

“*Ahh*…”

“I-It’s because of me?” Dialugia stuttered.

“Yes. Miss Dialuria doesn’t know exactly what her father does outside. She doesn’t know what kind of work he does, what his position is in society, and what kind of responsibilities he has. I’m sure she had heard some rumors, but your daughter is currently looking at a single truth—her father hasn’t been spending a lot of time with her,” he continued.

“I-I see,” she commented.

“She may have come to the conclusion that the reason why her guardian isn’t coming home as often is that Mr. Lee Ki-Young doesn’t cherish Miss Dialugia. It applies even more if your daughter had seen Mr. Lee Ki-Young with other women. Excuse me for

saying this, but I have seen a case similar to this when I had just entered this continent, but they were monsters, not humans…" he added.

Kang Hyun-Wook was extremely cautious because he was afraid that Dialugia was going to get mad for comparing dragons to monsters, but it wouldn't hurt to hear him out. Dialugia was indeed a transcendent being compared to humans, but Smartie was still at the age where she acted based on her instincts.

"You can tell us," I said.

"*Hm*, I remember a case like this one among the griffons living in a typical patriarchal society. I worked for a long time at the griffon training ground, but I only encountered a case like this once," he started.

"…"

"The situation was pretty similar as well. It happened after a male with numerous female partners became obsessed with one female griffon. Not only did the male stop giving attention to the other females and stopped going to them, but I remember him shunning the children that belonged to them as well. In the end, one of the baby griffons that didn't receive their father's attention started having strange thoughts," he continued.

"W-What kind of thoughts, Doctor?" Dialugia asked.

She started asking him questions, and she didn't seem angry about the fact that he had used griffons as an example, even though they were monsters.

"My mother isn't a charming woman and that's why my father doesn't love her. That's probably why I'm not getting any love from him either. It seemed like these were the type of thoughts the child had back then," he replied.

"*Huh…*"

"Miss Dialuria's case is a bit more serious because in the case I told you just now, the griffon didn't show any signs of the Electra complex. I'll have to look into it more to see why Miss Dialuria is showing signs of excessive obsession toward her guardian…" he added.

It was probably because of her unique habit.

“She’s likely trying to become a charming female to take her father for herself. And the reason why she has been ignoring her mother matches up as well,” he continued.

“Oh dear…”

“She probably thinks that her mother is just an annoying, worthless being. It’s also likely that she’s questioning how her mother even ended up being with her father. And controlling her will only get harder. If her mother takes care of her with all her might, it’ll become even harder to control her. Usually, the burden during this time—I mean, the child will start ranking its family members. And if you believe you can overcome all this by giving her even more love than before, then you’re mistaken.” Kang Hyun-Wook pointed out.

“So the more she does it, the worse Dialuria’s symptoms will become,” I chimed in.

“You’re right, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. It’ll only make your daughter feel resolute about her thoughts. Obviously, all this is nothing more than an assumption, and I can’t guarantee that my assumption is correct just with one look,” he reminded us.

But it made sense…

‘No… it’s like he’s a psychic… ’

I checked him with my attribute, but he didn’t have any special skills that allowed him to analyze a person or monster’s behavior. This examination was something only a professional who had seen, heard, and worked on many cases could do. Considering that he had made a living out of his talent back on Earth and even on this continent, he obviously wasn’t your normal human being.

‘It wouldn’t be a bad idea to befriend him… ’

He would be helpful in the future. Dialugia had to have been thinking of the same thing because she quickly spoke up.

“I-Is there a way to fix this? If this continues…”

She even looked like she was about to cry, which was understandable. She expected Smartie to grow just as much as the love she had been giving her, but Smartie was ignoring her mother instead. In addition, Smartie had even ranked her as the lowest within the nest, so she was understandably stupefied. Naturally, the biggest emotion

that encompassed all this was the guilt of not providing Smartie with a normal family.

'I feel kind of bad… '

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that I was the major cause of the problem. Dialugia was probably thinking that she had done something wrong and that was why this was happening, but I was obviously the culprit. Naturally, I had to fix this.

"I'm sure there's a way," I commented.

"Yes, there's a way and honestly, it's quite simple," Kang Hyun-Wook started.

"It's regaining her authority as her mother and showing that she and I have a good relationship," I replied.

"That's right. Miss Dialugia's role is important, but your role is very important as well. Mr. Lee Ki-Young and Miss Dialugia should…"

"I understand what you're saying," I interrupted him.

I also had to spend time with Dialugia and not just with Smartie.

"If possible, show her a lot of affection and it's important that you draw a line for your daughter. This area is your mother's area and it's not a place you can just go into. You must help her understand that her mother's rank isn't third," he explained.

"*Hm*… I see," I commented.

"Of course, Miss Dialugia's role is important. If you've been pouring all your love for her up until now, it's best if you start reducing that love from now on. I'm sure it won't be easy, but it's necessary. Likewise, you must show your daughter that you're spending a lot of time with Mr. Lee Ki-Young," he added.

"Okay…"

"I'm sure it'll be difficult because it's not easy to change a thought already embedded in your head. It'd be nice if I was just worried for no reason, but it's likely that your daughter will intensely reject it at first," he warned.

“Intensely reject? Then, wh-what should we do?” Dialugia stuttered.

“You need to keep going. You have to be stern, Miss Dialugia,”[1] he answered.

“*Oh*… I see.”

“I’ll say it again since it seems like you’re heart is soft when it comes to your daughter, Miss Dialugia,” Kang Hyun-Wook said.

“…”

“You have to be stern.”

It sounded like a famous line[2] I had heard from somewhere, and I was sure that line would keep repeating in Dialugia’s head. She had to have made up her mind because she nodded, bit her lips, and even tightened her fist. Even though she looked that way, I didn’t expect her to change much, but I wanted to compliment her for being somewhat determined.

‘I have a lot of acting to do.’

I was worried to the point that I was even having useless thoughts like having a private lesson with Ahn Ki-Mo.

The next day after our first consultation, I asked Kim Mi-Young to push all of my plans back, even if she had to force it, and headed to the nest. Naturally, I had to comfort Jung Ha-Yan, who wanted to spend all day with me, and because I was afraid that her eyes were going to watch me, I gave her a small homework, which was to do some research with Max. It was likely that she wouldn’t keep an eye on me if she was focused on something else. After tying up the sleeping Juliena in her sheath as if I was binding her, I left her in my room and left. I thought the present Lindel wasn’t ready to properly face the sword yet.

Anyway, I had a very important assignment.

‘Smartie Rehabilitation Project.’

We had decided to try the solution Dr. Kang Hyun-Wook gave us, and today was the first day. I was ready, but I had doubts whether Dialugia was ready or not. Anyway, the bowstring had already been pulled and the arrow was already in the air. Without

starting anything, nothing would change.

When I walked to the nest with heavy steps, I saw Smartie panting from far away.

"*Kyaaaaah! Pant, pant! Pant!*"

I was sure she had already heard from her mother, but I guess she didn't expect me to visit two days in a row because she looked extremely excited. In addition to her tail turning into a propeller, she was also running toward me while drooling. Her large eyes were so cute, that I unknowingly thought about how I wanted to hug her. However…

'You have to be stern.'

After slightly dodging, I immediately entered the nest and hugged Dialugia, who was waiting for me. Maybe it was because we had already talked about it ahead of time, but Dialugia also ran toward me and hugged me. Obviously, we looked awkward doing it.

"You're here," Dialugia said.

"…"

"*Kyaaaaaaaaaaah!*"

I heard a screech from behind me.

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1. Although the original term was 'Miss Guardian,' we went with 'Miss Dialugia' as using a name is more common in English. ☜

2. The famous line he is referring to is a line from a Korean drama, Sky Castle. "Housewives living at the exclusive Sky Castle community use every way they can think of to get their children into Seoul National University." ☜

CHAPTER 257
THERE ARE NO BAD DRAGONS IN THE WORLD (5)

'It's likely that your daughter will intensely reject it at first.'

Dr. Kang Hyun-Wook's warning popped into my head. The way Smartie screeched made it obvious that she was worked up and when I glanced at her, I saw fire in her eyes.

'What's wrong with her?'

The way she snorted and glared at us was kind of scary and her stance looked as if she was about to charge toward us. Naturally, Dialugia looked kind of surprised because she had never imagined that Smartie would react so violently.

'It's still a relief though.'

I guess she still had some common sense seeing that she still hadn't charged toward us. It was important to point out that she was restraining herself and it meant that there was still a chance. If she had always been this way from when she was still a baby, we would have to think really hard about how to fix her behavior.

"Have you been doing well, Smartie?" I asked.

"*Kyaaah!*"

I greeted Smartie after greeting Dialugia because Kang Hyun-Wook's solution said that we should show her that her mother was always first. Smartie kept jumping around while panting as if asking me to look at her, but other than patting her head, I didn't show any other reaction. She was showing me her shimmering eyes, but I tried my best to ignore them as I spoke toward Dialugia.

"Have you eaten?" I asked.

I wanted to speak casually, but I was more comfortable this way. But when I tried to talk as affectionately as possible, the dragon in front of me had to have felt nauseous because she looked pale.

'It's understandable.'

This side of me was extremely cringey. Even though Dialugia had polymorphed into a really beautiful humanoid, she was neither my type nor I had any other feelings for her in the first place. Since she had a pretty ordinary habit, I was sure I wasn't her type as well. We knew better than anyone that we didn't have any romantic feelings for each other, so obviously, acting in this kind of situation was kind of difficult.

"No, I was waiting for you so that we can eat together," she replied.

"What about Smartie?" I asked.

"Not yet…" she mumbled.

"We should eat a light meal then," I suggested.

"Since you were coming today, I actually prepared something for you, honey. Let's go in," she told me.

'This is so awkward.'

It was awkward seeing Dialugia being as nice as possible while maintaining a smile and the fact that she had even dressed up more than usual made me feel weird. Her hair neatly tied around her large horns was wavier today, and even though makeup wasn't really necessary, she looked like she had put some makeup on. And it also looked like she carefully picked her clothes. The saying that a person was highly influenced by the atmosphere they were in had to be right because Dialugia looked like she was trying to imitate the women in their 20s walking around Lindel square.

'It doesn't really fit her though… '

Anyway, she did look beautiful, and I was sure she was shocked when she was told that Smartie didn't think of her as a charming woman.

'I'm sure of it.'

If she had changed this much as a human, I was curious about what she would look like as a dragon. Of course, I couldn't judge her based on the beauty standards of the dragons, but I was certain her black scales would be shining today.

Anyway, we started spending time while maintaining this awkward family atmosphere. During all of this, Smartie continued throwing herself toward me to try to get my attention, but I followed the doctor's advice and didn't give her my attention unless it was necessary. Of course, I was still reacting to her.

"That's great."

Or…

"Our Smartie is cute."

These were the comments I made. Usually, I would clap and pet her here and there, but I didn't show an enthusiastic reaction this time. Instead, I talked and looked at Dialugia more. I was sure she would get worked up and screech once again, but I had to do this to show Smartie that this area didn't belong to her. It was the same when we were eating. I acted as if I cherished Dialugia more than anyone else, and it didn't take long before Smartie realized that she was second place in the family.

"How was the food?" Dialugia asked.

"It was delicious. I enjoyed it thanks to you. I'll wash the dishes so you can just sit and relax," I told her.

"No, I'll do it. I haven't really been out on a hunt…" she said.

"No, I'll—"

"How about we do it together?" she suggested.

"It's really fine…" I mumbled.

"No, let's do it together," she insisted.

This wasn't like me at all and I could guarantee that anyone else, aside from Smartie, wouldn't fall for my acting. Trying to play along with Dialugia was harder than I thought, but I was relieved that the situation itself wasn't that bad.

Standing happily next to each other while washing the dishes was extremely bothersome, but whenever our shoulders slightly touched, it looked kind of romantic. However, I didn't like the fact that we just washed the dishes without much laughter.

'She's ticklish.'

It was a distinct memory because she almost crushed me flat during the experiment back then. I touched Dialugia's hand discreetly with my bubble-covered hand, but she looked at me as if she was questioning what I was doing, but she didn't reject it. She knew she shouldn't push my hand away right now. And when I scratched the back of her hand lightly, I heard her giggle, and I instantly knew it was a success.

"I-I'm ticklish. *Keke*…" Dialugia giggled.

"*Haha.*"

It was such a typical romantic sight, but it was effective and we continued talking to each other. I was the one doing the talking while she listened. The conversation was mostly about the things that happened in the city, but it did feel like we had a mutual understanding.

Since we had never talked to each other for this long, I noticed more strengths than weaknesses from her, the more we talked to each other. We were getting along better than I had expected, and the things we had in common were surprising.

"*Keke*, that's kind of funny," Dialugia commented.

"Really?" I asked.

"Yes. It's the funniest story I've heard recently. *Ah!* Now that I think about it, is… is that museum manager doing okay?" she asked.

"He's adapting well right now. He's stronger than ordinary children, so he wasn't that badly injured to begin with," I replied.

"How's your work?" she asked.

"The research just started, but I should be getting some results soon," I answered.

“That’s interesting,” she responded.

“What is?” I asked.

“The fact that you can display mana holograms in different directions from one location. Humans have always been like that; they would always create interesting items. I honestly wasn’t that friendly toward humans, but I know there are things I can learn from them,” she answered.

“That’s kind of interesting. If you read the ancient books of the Empire, the dragons were mostly described as possessors of high-level magic and were quite skilled in that department as well…” I commented.

“I’ve heard. And that’s a misconception humans have toward us, but if you think about it, you’ll find the answer. Our race—” she paused.

“*Hm*, you don’t need it,” I said, finishing her sentence.

“Yes, we don’t need magic. Of course, we can learn it, but there’s no need. All dragons can use magic, and they tend to take a huge interest in the human world, so the elders will most likely treat them as freaks. In some ways, humans are pretty amazing,” she explained.

“I don’t really understand why you’re telling me this,” I told her.

“It’s exactly as I said. Humans continue to advance because they’re weak. They keep making weapons, learning magic, and keep searching for new things. Of course, that greed has led to some negative results, but there are positive results as well. Honestly, you…” Dialugia stopped.

“What?” I asked.

“It’s nothing…” she mumbled.

“What is it?” I asked again.

“Don’t worry about it,” she replied.

“Please tell me, wife,” I begged.

“Th-That kind of nickname is gross,” she muttered.

“Our child is watching,” I reminded her.

“…”

“…”

“I said it because I’m really curious, Dialugia,” I added.

“It’s really nothing. As I explained earlier, I just think you’re amazing. Especially the Dragon Breath Potion and the serum you made… You’re even more amazing if we consider the fact that your physical capabilities and magic affinity is lacking compared to other humans. So, I’m saying you’re not that bad,” she complimented me.

“Am I different from your first impression of me?” I asked.

“Thinking about that moment even now makes me angry, so please don’t mention it…” Dialugia warned.

“*Ah*, got it. *Pffft*,” I replied.

“*Pffft*.”

When I chuckled, Dialugia giggled and she wasn’t acting this time. She was laughing because our first meeting was so ridiculous. She was also probably surprised that we ended up like this after everything we had gone through. I had no clue about her actual feelings, but she was probably thinking that life here wasn’t all that bad.

‘That makes me happy… ’

Reacting naturally was much better than a forced act.

At some point, I stopped hearing Smartie’s screech, and naturally, I thought it wouldn’t be so bad to maintain this atmosphere. When I slightly raised my hand and pushed Dialugia’s hair back, she looked at me with her eyes widened.

‘She sure is pretty… ’

Maybe it was because of her large horns, but the atmosphere felt strange. Seeing her blushing made it seem like she was kind of flustered, but I think showing this much affection was okay. At this point, I was sure she was determined to create a peaceful family for Smartie.

'I think this is peaceful enough… '

When I thought about kissing her forehead to *really* show Smartie our affection, I saw her grabbing my leg and trying to separate me from her mother.

'This girl… '

"*Keeeek, keeeek… kyaaaah*!"

As if she couldn't stand it, Smartie used her strength to pull me away and I resisted fiercely because I thought she was going to drag me away if I didn't resist.

"*Kyaaaaaaaah!*"

To make things worse, she started crying as if she was telling me to stop. Her face reminded me of a tragic heroine and a wife whose husband was taken away by a gold digger.

'She's your mom, Smartie.'

"*Keeeek… keek*…"

She kept on glaring at her mom while crying. I thought that maybe Kang Hyun-Wook's diagnosis was wrong, but regardless of the outcome, we had to do this.

'Right. We have to… We have to correct this family's discipline method.'

I just had to do it slowly, one step at a time. Right now, Smartie was making a fuss because she didn't want her mom to take her dad away, but with repetitive learning, I was sure she would realize it. I was worried if Dialugia would be able to endure Smartie's glare, but when I saw her determined expression, I felt like she was more than capable of enduring it.

"I'm talking with your mom, Smartie. Don't act like this," I told her.

"*Kyaaaaaah!*"

"Hey! Stop making a fuss," I scolded her.

"*Keeeee… Pant, pant… Pant.*"

To grab my attention, Smartie started jumping around because I had always liked seeing her do that while she was still a child. But my heart broke when I saw her jumping around while crying.

"You can't keep acting like this. You have to learn how to stand on your own," I informed her.

Dialugia had to have seen this as her chance because she gathered her courage and started talking, "D-Dialuria. Listen to your father, okay?"

She had the face of a determined mother, and I nodded at Dialugia to tell her that she was doing the right thing.

"N-No!!!"

When I turned back again after hearing the unfamiliar voice, I saw a little girl glaring at Dialugia as if she wanted to kill her.

"*Huh?* Smartie?"

When I saw what she looked like, I had no idea if I could call her Smartie again.

CHAPTER 258
THERE ARE NO BAD DRAGONS IN THE WORLD (6)

'What the heck?'

It was a very shocking situation. Smartie was still huffing, but now, she looked exactly like Dialugia. She had immature horns, while her short and large eyes reminded me of the time when she was still a baby and was the cutest thing ever. But now that she had grown so much, her cuteness was no longer there. Her hair came down to her waist and her skin was as white as her mother's skin. At first, she didn't wear any clothes, but as time passed, she started wearing them. I wasn't sure if this was Dialugia's intention, but the clothes Smartie was wearing closely resembled the clothes she was wearing. Even the way she sat on a chair closely resembled the way her mother sat, of course, I wasn't sure if they had noticed that. Anyway, it seemed like Dialugia had been influencing her because the way she bit her lips, the habit of wrapping her hair around her horns, and the way she tapped the floor with one foot resembled Dialugia.

'They really look alike but… '

It seemed like Dialuria would look like her mother as she grew older.

'There still is a bit of difference… '

But even with the slight difference, it seemed like Dialuria was made from the same mold as her mother.

I guess Smartie still hadn't realized this because she didn't even look at her mother as she tightly grabbed onto my arm.

After a moment of silence, Dialugia spoke to Smartie with a slightly excited tone.

"Dialuria… what happened? You suddenly…"

It was ridiculous how Dialugia looked kind of happy after the situation had settled down. Even though I didn't hear the exact explanation, I guess polymorphing into a human form at her age was rare. Unlike her assumption that she had to wait longer, Dialuria had polymorphed into a human form as if it was nothing, and I was sure Dialugia was thinking that our daughter was a genius. Of course, I wasn't criticizing her for thinking that way because it was natural to have that thought and to be happy about it. However, I was worried about whether it was necessary to express her happiness or not.

'It was going so well… '

It was chaotic, but no one could deny that this was a brand-new situation. There were pros and cons to this, but when thinking about it in terms of controlling Smartie, I would say the pros outweighed the cons. Smartie understood us before, but being able to directly communicate with her meant we could comfort her properly.

'Although that's not always the case… '

"…"

Smartie ignored Dialugia's words and kept on staring at me. Dialugia was upset and she spoke again.

"Dialuria, you need to listen to your mother."

The way she scolded Smartie was cringey because after saying something to her, Dialugia would look around as if she had made a mistake. It became obvious how Dialugia was being treated when I wasn't here and even when Smartie was still in her dragon form, I was sure Dialugia spent every day like this.

'She really is an angel.'

Despite that, I still couldn't understand the overly affectionate mother's attitude toward Smartie, but then, a mother's love was something I couldn't understand in the first place.

"How are you feeling, Dialuria? C-Can you walk? Your mana looks good… You're amazing. It took me over a hundred years to do what you just did…" Dialugia informed her.

'Don't say something like that to her, woman.'

I was certain that the more she complimented Smartie, the more Smartie would look down on her. It would be nice if I was just being needlessly worried, but children her age were usually simple-minded.

"I knew you were smart… and your mana is higher compared to children your age…"

'Stop complimenting her.'

"I didn't think you'd be able to talk right away… You really are amazing. Can you tell me what you're feeling right now?" Dialugia asked.

'I told you to stop.'

I couldn't help but wonder if she listened to any of the advice from yesterday, but I guess people like her were called 'good-for-nothing' for a reason.

In the end, I had to step up and as soon as I spoke, Smartie looked at me. I wasn't the authoritative type, but as the head of this household, I had to be.

"Luria."

"Yes, Dad!"

"You need to answer your mother's question sincerely," I told her.

"*Ah*, okay…" she mumbled.

"And sit up straight. Even though I haven't told you this, I love your mother. Even though I'm only telling you this now, I still haven't forgiven you for your actions last time and if your mother hadn't asked me to forgive you, I wouldn't be here right now. I'm happy that you're growing and showing results, but this kind of attitude is unacceptable. I wonder if you have been treating your mother like this, this entire time……" I paused.

"I-I haven't…" Smartie stuttered.

"That's a relief, but please be careful," I said.

'Well said.'

Telling Smartie that I loved her mother was the best choice.

"You should apologize to your mother first," I instructed.

"I'm… sorry," Smartie said.

"I-It's okay, Dialuria… I can't believe our Dialuria actually apologized… It's making me cry…" Dialugia mumbled.

"Go hug her," I told Smartie.

"Okay."

Dialugia must have been touched when Smartie bowed and ran into her arms because she wiped her eyes with her hand, but I didn't think the situation had improved. Smartie was just aware of my mood and for some reason, she still considered her mother as her love rival. She may be enduring it for now, but once I left, her attitude would most likely return to how it was before.

'Oh, dear… '

I had never imagined that a situation I had only seen on the Internet would become my reality and it was even worse than those depicted on the Internet. Seeing the polymorphed Dialuria, it felt like something that was far away suddenly came up close to me. That was the difference between having a dragon's appearance and a human's appearance. Of course, she was still someone I had to take care of, but Dialuria had felt more like a pet when she was still in her dragon form. I wasn't sure if this was a good thing or a bad thing, but seeing her human form made me feel a sense of responsibility that wasn't there before.

'I hate this… '

I somewhat knew I was a father, but this situation made me even more aware of it.

'What do I do now… '

While thinking, I heard Dialuria's voice.

"*Um*, Dad."

"Yeah?"

"Can I be with you every day, too?" I asked.

'This was the reason why… '

This was the reason why I felt like a large burden was weighing on me. Obviously, I was Smartie's main focus and even though she was jealous of Dialugia, I guess she didn't like being apart from me even more than her jealousy. Now, I had an inkling why the birthrate of the players who had settled here was decreasing.

I didn't know how to answer her and of course, I wasn't planning on lying to her. Smartie's comment had to have hurt Dialugia because she looked like she was in pain. I didn't want to give her this answer, but I had to speak slowly while shaking my head. After all, honesty was a lot better than lying to her.

"You can't be with me right now because I have a lot to do. I have a lot of work to do starting next week… You understand that I'm busy, right?"

"Yes…" she replied.

"But once I have less work, I'm sure we can be together every day. Of course, if I finish my work next week, I'll do my best to stop by," I added.

"Really?" she asked.

"Of course, I promise. Now, you promise me, too," I said.

"What kind…"

"First, respect your mother and treat her well. Second, apologize to the boy you saw a few days ago and get along with him. *Ah*… one more thing. Even in the human world, I want you to get along with the other humans and be nice. If you keep these three promises, I think I'll like Luria even more…" I explained.

"I'll keep those promises! I can do it!" she exclaimed.

"Really?" I asked.

“Yes! I can do it!” she shouted again.

I guess my comment, *‘I think I’ll like Luria even more’* was *very* effective.

After we locked our pinkies and made the promise, she hugged me.

“I’m so happy!” she said.

Smartie buried her face into my chest. I guess she retained her habit when she was still in her dragon form because instead of wagging her tail, she was shaking her butt. However, it would have been better if she didn’t do that.

I wanted to change into a strong father, but seeing her hug me like this made it difficult to maintain my act.

‘It’s hard to push her away.’

I felt like I shouldn’t push her away in this situation.

I just had to take one step at a time. Since Dialugia and I had made some progress, I thought it wouldn’t be so bad to pat her. When I nodded lightly and patted her, she laid down on the ground and acted cute as if she wanted me to touch her stomach. She looked like a human, but she was still Smartie.

“*Purr… purr…*”

When I gently stroked her chin, she started purring, but I was relieved that she didn’t start panting. If her tongue was long, then she probably would have licked me like she had been doing before.

“Good girl! That’s a good girl!” I complimented her.

“*Kyah! Kyah! Kyah!*”

The way she released her distinctive cry with her human voice while jumping around was cute.

‘So this is why fathers love their daughters a lot… ’

Of course, it was difficult to say that this was her normal behavior, but since she was

showing the same behavior as when she was still Smartie in her dragon form, she didn't seem out of place. I could even see glimpses of her habit while she was in her dragon form.

Dialugia seemed like she didn't know what to do when Smartie's time was coming to an end. She was watching from a few steps back. I guess she wanted to join in because when I signaled her to come over, she started walking toward us. Smartie glared at her mother next to me, but I guess seeing us all together improved her mood. It was either that, or she recalled the promise she had made to me. To be honest, Dialugia seemed to be enjoying it more than Smartie. The short time that Smartie and I had was something she had always been watching from afar. Now that she was a part of it, she had to be thinking that it was better than she thought, as she looked at Smartie with joy while Smartie was jumping around. Sometimes, Smartie would run up to her mom and give her an awkward hug, but whenever she did that, I guess Dialugia couldn't suppress her intense emotions because she would turn her head away as her eyes reddened.

I wasn't sure whether Dr. Kang Hyun-Wook's solution was effective or not, but seeing that Smartie had reacted to it, it meant his solution could be used in a positive way.

'This is family.'

We could still be considered a fractured family, but I wouldn't even call us a family at all just a few days ago. It felt like we had created a nice atmosphere between us three—that was the best way to express it. And of course…

"I like you a lot, Dad!" Smartie exclaimed.

Her strange desire still worried me, but I had no choice but to believe that only time would fix it.

[Checking the Unique Habit of the Legendary-Ranked Named Monster, the Black Dragon Dialuria.]

[A twisted and dangerous affection in the dark]

[#Why isn't he calling me Smartie?] [# Whatever. Dad is mine.] [#I'm not giving him to Mom.] [#Love changes.]

Time would definitely fix it.

CHAPTER 259
OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT (1)

We were done handling the issue with Smartie. I had been hoping Smartie would change dramatically in a short period of time, but that miracle didn't happen. The only thing that changed dramatically was her appearance, however, that didn't mean there weren't any other changes at all.

Little by little, Dialugia was regaining her position within the family and Smartie was also starting to acknowledge her mother's position. Whenever Dialugia and I were together, Smartie would either jump around or do something unexpected to grab my attention, but whatever she did, they all looked cute to me.

It wasn't that noticeable, but Smartie was slowly changing. Of course, I didn't know whether this change was intentional or not, but Dialugia would express her happiness about it every day. Smartie's simple kindness would emotionally move her, and she often pondered about how Smartie's behavior had changed compared to before. Naturally, Dialugia would give Smartie more than what the latter gave her, and it was bad from my point of view. It was just my personal opinion, but Smartie had to be apart from her mother.

In the end, Smartie started going to school with Max. Dialugia didn't seem to like the fact that the dragon Smartie was receiving the same education as humans, but she knew that being around other people would help form her character, so she agreed to it, and it was the right decision. We made this decision because Dr. Kang Hyun-Wook recommended it and the interesting part was that this solution was for Dialugia, not for Smartie. I thought Dialugia needed personal time to herself. It was all because I knew that many mothers would stop taking care of themselves once they had children…

'Parenting depression?'

Dialugia had achieved a pretty high score on the test Dr. Kang Hyun-Wook used on Earth. She reached the highest scores, so I was worried. Naturally, Dialugia said that there was nothing to worry about and laughed it off, but based on the results, it was anything but funny. According to the expert, it wouldn't be strange if she suddenly

ran rampant. She was a dragon, so she would naturally have a hard time expressing herself, and it was the reason why stress kept on building up inside her. I supported Dialugia with everything I had, like helping her find a hobby she could do while Smartie was at school. Dialugia didn't know what to do with the free time she had unexpectedly received, but her expression looked increasingly brighter with every passing day.

'That's not the case for me… '

My position was completely different from hers.

'I'm so busy… '

I only spent a short while, but I had to move nonstop. Since I had pushed back the tasks that had already been pushed back once, I naturally had even more work to handle. I finally realized what people meant when they said they didn't even have the time to take a breath.

Overall, three things happened.

1. Managing my connection with the Vatican.

I had many conversations with Father Basel again, whom I had met after a long time. When I heard that the current Pope of the Holy Empire was going to return to god's side soon due to his old age, I wanted to scream. Of course, I heard from Father Basel that one of the three cardinals was going to be elected as the new pope and that among them, he was most likely going to get elected. If Father Basel became the Pope, then my status would also go up, and since there was a chance I could get promoted from being an honorary bishop, I was busy trying to make a good impression.

In addition to spending time with Father Basel, I also had a prayer meeting with Sister Jessica, who had become the archbishop, and Helena, a heretic inquisitor. And we reaffirmed our connection. Aside from them, I met with other members of the Vatican, ate with them, did volunteer work, and participated in various activities. Since I no longer had to manage my connection with the bishops, I brought Sun Hee-Young with me when I visited the Vatican.

'It was great.'

Obviously, Sun Hee-Young became close to the bishops because she was an exemplary priest. Since she had become a lot closer to them than I thought, I thought it would be okay to transfer all of my tasks to her, aside from managing my relationship with Father Basel.

2. Managing my connection with the nobles.

Managing the emperor's faction was just as important as managing the Vatican. Since I had a direct connection to the Vatican, I didn't really focus on the social circles, but since Lady Caitlyn and the other noblewomen had helped a lot with Ito Sota's case, it was really important to take care of them. After my reunion with Father Basel, I was invited to the nobles' social meeting and met many people there.

I could remember that I was the busiest during these times. The adventure log of the Blue and Black Swan Guild was revealed, so everyone was talking about the museum. I was receiving a lot of attention as a seatholder of the Eight Seats and with the museum on top of it, my fame started shooting through the roof. More noblewomen flocked to me, and I was able to obtain various information. Despite being busy, gossiping with them was pretty fun and they even mentioned the imperial princess. Since I had neither seen nor heard of her, it was a pretty refreshing topic to me.

3. Castle Rock's Black Market.

After attending the social meeting, I headed to Castle Rock, which was Lady Marilyn's hometown. Publicly, it was because Lady Marilyn had invited me, but I was actually heading there to check on the black market in Castle Rock. Since Jo Hye-Jin was firmly against activities like slave arenas, I couldn't start something like that, but this black market still had decent returns and was operating pretty well. All I could do was nod after checking it myself.

'Not bad.'

I thought it wouldn't matter if I got involved in some illegal businesses, but since I couldn't manage them myself, I had no choice but to give up many of them. Fortunately, it wasn't like I started this black market for money. This black market only existed as a way to keep tabs and list the customers using this place. Nothing more, nothing less.

'I'm sure it'll be useful later.'

A black market customer list and ledger could grant me great power. Of course, we had advertised that everything would remain secret, but no secret lasted forever in this world. If I used the documents and ledgers to track their location, I would be able to easily find out the identity of the masked customers. I couldn't really look around because Lady Marilyn stuck close to me like glue, but from what I could tell, I would give the black market a 3.5 out of 5. I didn't think it was that bad.

"*Whew*…"

The tasks I listed earlier were the main tasks, but they weren't the only things I worked on. There were some internal affairs I had to take care of as well.

Max was sort of having a difficult time and while he was researching the mana hologram device with Jung Ha-Yan, I was getting ready for business with Lee Ji-Hye, and we officially started decorating the museum. I didn't forget to support the rookies as well. After a debate with Han Sora, I learned how black mages worked and I officially started supporting Yoo Ah-Young so that she can quickly increase her blacksmith skills. I continued researching new potions and I thought about how I should get rid of the serum that Park Deok-Gu didn't get to use. During all of this, I also had to take care of Jung Ha-Yan's mental health and spend time with Smartie, so even if I had five clones, it still wouldn't be enough. It was similar to the time when Kim Hyun-Sung gave me all the work in the guild, but the only difference was that Kim Hyun-Sung was just as busy as me and it was all because…

'Because he has no time… '

It was because he didn't want to keep pushing back the official announcement of the Holy Empire's Eight Seats. He had to make time no matter what and to do that, he had no choice but to get busy.

I was able to relax a bit because I finished the tasks I had mentioned earlier, but everyone looked kind of frustrated. Just like Kim Hyun-Sung and me, the Guild Master of the Red Mercenary Guild was also busy.

"It's really annoying. The official announcement is fine, but is it really necessary for the eight people to gather together when we're all in different cities? Can't the emperor just make an official announcement himself?" Cha Hee-Ra vented.

"Seriously…" I commented.

“He knows that we’re busy and yet, he does something like this. I’m sure the Taiwanese and Japanese players are frustrated as well. Empty formalities had always been a problem here or on Earth. Empty formalities… I’m sure they’ll be even more annoying by telling us that there’s going to be a party afterward… It’s so annoying. Don’t you agree, darling?” she asked.

“I’m sure the emperor wants to show everyone that he’s doing something. I haven’t heard the details, but it seems like he has been losing his power…” I answered.

“Really?” she asked.

“Yeah. It could just be a rumor, but it’s news among the nobles. The Vatican has been getting stronger lately, so it’s understandable that he’s losing power. Well, I’m sure the rumors are true. The fact that there’s a rumor like that in the first place means the nobles have been turning a blind eye to it, and I’m sure the emperor wants to use this chance to show that he’s in good health. Those who had already caught on know that he’s just putting on a show, but the citizens aren’t interested in that kind of stuff. They just accept it because those were the emperor’s words,” I explained.

“I don’t think I’ve heard that before… Black Swan’s Guild Master, have you heard about this, too?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“Yes, I have heard the rumors as well.”

When Cha Hee-Ra asked Park Yeon-Joo, who was talking with Kim Hyun-Sung, she nodded and answered. Cha Hee-Ra in front of me looked kind of annoyed, and I had an idea why she was feeling that way, so I slowly turned my head.

“Looks like we were the last ones to find out again. How about you two just work together and forget about the three alliances?” Cha Hee-Ra complained.

“…”

“Honestly, I’m really disappointed about the museum situation. Darling, if you were in my position, you would feel the same way, right?” she asked.

“I’m sorry, Miss Cha Hee-Ra. We have already received a lot of help from the Red Mercenary Guild, and since we heard that you’re already in another dungeon, we thought it would be best not to tell you.”

“I was just venting, so don’t mind me. Even if I couldn’t participate in the capture, I’m still thankful that you were considerate enough to allow me to invest in it. But next time, just tell me straight. I’m not really the type to calculate the loss and profit, and if my allies are in danger, it’s only natural that I send out my troops,” she informed them.

“Got it.”

Park Yeon-Joo nodded and it seemed like she understood what Cha Hee-Ra was saying. If Park Yeon-Joo was thinking that this alliance was formed based on common interests, then Cha Hee-Ra understood this alliance as something more than that. I had always been thinking about it, but I was sure Cha Hee-Ra’s personality was the reason why her guild members were affectionate toward her, rather than her powers.

‘What she’s doing isn’t easy… ’

I could never do what Cha Hee-Ra had been doing.

Anyway, waiting around like this was starting to bother me a bit, so I started looking around and saw a large room. Kim Hyun-Sung, Cha Hee-Ra, and Park Yeon-Joo were sitting and their adjutants were standing behind them. Jo Hye-Jin was behind Kim Hyun-Sung, a nameless executive of the Red Mercenary Guild was behind Cha Hee-Ra, and Lee Ji-Hye was standing behind Park Yeon-Joo. The Blue Guild usually didn’t have adjutants following people around, but because of the purpose of this meeting, we had no choice but to pick one from our party and Jo Hye-Jin was the lucky person to get picked. Since she had a close relationship with Kim Hyun-Sung in the latter’s past life, he probably thought this kind of meeting was suitable for her. I brought an adjutant with me as well. And when I looked back, the adjutant looked at me with a bright smile.

“…”

“…”

It was Jung Ha-Yan.

‘I honestly think she’s more than qualified to sit with us… ’

While having different thoughts, the door slowly opened. Kasugano Yuno entered

first and behind her was someone I had never seen before.

'The Eight Seats of the Benigoa Holy Empire.'

This was my first time meeting the other three, but it seemed like it wasn't the case for Kim Hyun-Sung.

'I'm sure he met them in his past life… '

I saw our Hyun-Sung looking at the people who entered one by one.

CHAPTER 260
OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT (2)

Two men and a woman. The person who entered right behind Kasugano Yuno had to be one of the Yozora Guild members from Japan. Naturally, I used Mind's Eye to check their stats.

'Suzumiya Ibuki.'

The name of her job was *Twilight Assassin* and she was a strong player in charge of Celia after the late Ito Sota. I had heard about her from Kasugano Yuno. It had been three years since she arrived, and she was one of the talented members of the Yozora Guild. Overall, her stats were balanced, but her agility definitely caught my attention. Since both her job and attribute were legendary-rank, I thought she could be a seatholder of the Eight Seats.

'She's strong… '

She had to have stood out even in Kim Hyun-Sung's past when Ito Sota was still probably alive because Kim Hyun-Sung nodded when he saw her. I guess she was famous in that life, too. Her nature wasn't bad and her unique habit was ordinary, and even though she seemed a bit timid, she was definitely skilled.

The people who entered next were a man and a woman.

'Taiwanese… '

They were guild masters of the large guilds that represented the Free City of Dawan.

'Cheon Kwan-Wi.'

He was tall with a staff, I didn't even need to say what kind of job he had.

'A mage?'

To be exact, his job was a legendary-ranked *Mist Summoner.* After reading the

description, I had an idea about what kind of magic he could use. Even though he didn't own any legendary-ranked item, his magic stat was 96, so I instantly knew just how much time he invested in magic. Considering the fact that there weren't that many competent mages on this continent, his achievement was pretty incredible. Still…

'He's weaker than Ha-Yan… '

Of course, he wasn't so weak I could look down on him. When it came to experience, skills, and the number of spells they could use, it would be pretty difficult to determine the better mage. However, when I thought about the monster-like growth Jung Ha-Yan had been showing me, I couldn't imagine her suffering a defeat. However, I was sure he also had a few tricks up his sleeve.

The person who walked in next was a woman with her hair tied to one side.

'Yu Ran.'

She was a typical archer, but I had a strong feeling that she was a powerful person who was true to her feelings. Her job was an epic-ranked *Long-Range Sniper.* She had good stats, but her legendary-ranked attribute, Perfect Marksmanship, was what caught my attention the most. It was pretty self-explanatory, and the interesting part was that the equipment and accessories the woman was wearing were pretty expensive as well. I was wearing the same brand of clothes as her, so I instantly recognized them.

'They're a good pair.'

Everyone was strong, but I felt like I shouldn't look down on the synergy those two had. I could already imagine the Mist Summoner blinding the enemy and the Long-Range Sniper shooting an arrow toward the enemy's head. If I got the chance to use them on the battlefield, I would pair them up no matter what, and I was sure those two knew that they had good synergy.

'That's probably why those two were able to rise to the top.'

Kim Hyun-Sung's reaction wasn't that bad so I guess it was a good thing. When I saw that he was greeting them with a smile, I guess no one here was a psychopathic killer like Jung Jin-Ho or a demon worshiper like Ito Sota.

'Not bad.'

I had no idea about the standards for selecting the seatholders of the Eight Seats, and everyone here was qualified, but if I had to pick one…

'Maybe I'm the biggest troll.'[1]

Anyway, Kasugano Yuno slightly nodded toward me and I returned the gesture in kind. She must have realized that she had to act normally in places like this because even though she still had her eyes closed, her outfit was neat. I was kind of surprised because even after she went to her seat, she continued looking at me. However, she may have read my expression because she immediately turned her head away.

"I'm Suzumiya Ibuki."

"We've heard a lot about you."

"Cheon Kwan-Wi."

"*Ah*, I'm Lee Ki-Young."

"Yu Ran. I'm from Dawan."

"Nice to meet you."

It was an awkward self-introduction. Unlike the powerful players who already knew each other, Kim Hyun-Sung and I were new here, so we only sat down after shaking hands with the others. I wasn't really nervous, but the atmosphere felt tense.

'Maybe it's supposed to be tense… '

Those gathered here were people who had arrived and settled on this continent a long time ago and had gained both power and fame through their own methods. As such, the atmosphere would naturally be tense.

The one who broke the ice was the Mist Summoner, Cheon Kwan-Wi. I noticed his sour expression when he first entered, so I was assuming he didn't like the people who were chosen. He didn't speak aggressively, but he was expressing his opinion.

"Four people, two, two…"

“Unsatisfied?”

“It’s nothing, Miss Cha-Hee Ra. It’s not that I’m unsatisfied, but it’s more like the selection seems… to have been biased to one side,” he replied.

“So, you’re unsatisfied,” she commented.

“Of course, I acknowledge the fact that the skills of the new members from Lindel are remarkable, however… I just feel that it’s a pity, so don’t mind what I just said. There are a lot of talented people in Dawan as well…” he said.

“I think you just said that so that we’ll worry about it.” Cha Hee-Ra pointed out.

“You really don’t have to worry about it,” he told her.

“How could I not worry about it after hearing you say that? Do you have any complaints?” she asked.

“It’s nothing you need to worry about, Miss Cha Hee-Ra,” he repeated.

“*Woah*, look at you. You look like you’re about to hit me. You’re funny. It seemed like yesterday when you couldn’t even look straight at me,” she said.

“That was a long time ago…” Cheon Kwan-Wi mumbled.

“You weren’t like this when you knelt before me asking me to spare you,” she added.

“Miss Cha Hee-Ra…”

I guess he was trying to set the mood by muddying the water, but he didn’t seem like a bad guy. Something I wasn’t aware of had to have happened in the past. I was able to quickly assume that he had some sort of conflict with Cha Hee-Ra back then. He must have felt embarrassed that his embarrassing past was revealed in front of the new members because he hurriedly tried to fix the situation, but there was no way he could control Cha Hee-Ra. She spoke while looking at his flustered face.

“Kwan-Wi, don’t take this the wrong way. The empire was being considerate of you, not us. Lindel could’ve taken another seat, but we didn’t want you guys to feel bad, so we decided to be considerate. Understand?”

“No way…” Cheon Kwan-Wi mumbled.

“You think I’m lying?” she asked.

When Cha Hee-Ra looked over at Jung Ha-Yan, Cheon Kwan-Wi’s face turned pale. It was like he was asking, *‘how come I haven’t noticed her until now?’*

I thought they would recognize each other since they were both mages.

“Our second girlfriend… It has been over a year since you arrived, right?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“No… way…” he muttered again.

“What do you mean? My darling and his guild master, Kim Hyun-Sung, are here. And Jung Ha-Yan, that girl over there, was the player who cleared the tutorial dungeon the fastest. I already knew they were going to be successful, but I had never imagined they would become *this* successful. Well… they’re lucky and skilled… anyway, that’s that,” she explained.

“*Huh*…”

“There’s one more person, but they’re still a bit lacking to join us. Still, they’re pretty useful,” she added.

“How unfair,” he commented.

“I sometimes feel that way as well. What do you think? I want to hear it from the empire’s most famous mage…” she requested.

“No comment,” he replied.

Jung Ha-Yan watched the situation as if it had nothing to do with her, but when Cha Hee-Ra mentioned her, everyone focused on her. Yu Ran, the archer, was especially staring at her.

“Lindel really has a lot of talented people. We have two new seatholders of the Eight Seats despite the fact that they’ve only been here for a year. I didn’t think you owned such a talented mage… Before I saw you with my own eyes, I did think that the empire was giving Lindel an excessive amount of privilege, but now, I see that you’re

different," Yu Ran explained.

"I'm flattered," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"No, I'm just saying how I see it, Guild Master of the Blue Guild. I don't think I have to check to know that you're strong… I can't really say much about the other new member since he's a non-combatant, but I'm sure he had received a lot of points because he owns a dragon," Yu Ran continued.

'She's right.'

However, she was pretty straightforward. Kim Hyun-Sung smiled and spoke, "He's a very talented alchemist."

"I know because I have been using the potion being distributed in Dawan. Thanks to that, the players' survival rate has improved a lot. It's a bit expensive, but I believe it's only right for me to express my gratitude. *Ah*, are you planning on selling the item you have in your pocket?" she asked.

She had to be referring to the Dragon Breath Potion I brought with me. As an archer, I knew her eyes were sharp, but it was sharper than I had imagined.

"I'd like to if I get the chance, but it's an item that can't be mass-produced. Since it's a legendary-ranked potion, it costs a lot just to craft one," I replied.

"That's unfortunate. Anyway, it's nice meeting you all. For the others, I believe this is our first time meeting after that incident… I'm relieved that the Guild Master of the Red Mercenary and the Yozora Guild are doing well," she said.

"The way you talk hasn't changed," Cha Hee-Ra commented.

"There you go again. You still have a foul mouth, Miss Cha Hee-Ra. I understand that Kwan-Wi has put you in a bad mood, but I hope you don't take it out on me. Don't you think he said that for Dawan? Even though we work together, I have never been dissatisfied with this selection. Really. *Ah!* This is a different topic, but… the new member has a good eye," Yu Ran complimented.

"What are you talking about?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

She had to be referring to me because we were wearing clothes from the same

brand. After looking at me dumbfoundedly, Cha Hee-Ra suddenly sighed and shook her head, so I guess she understood why Yu Ran had said that.

“Since fate has let us gather like this, how about we go out to eat? Miss Kasugano Yuno and… *Ah*, *um*…” she paused.

“It’s Suzumiya Ibuki.”

“*Ah*, what about you, Miss Ibuki?” she asked.

“I’m okay. If… I had the time,” she stopped.

“I’m sure she’ll be busy attending the party *they’re* hosting,” Cha Hee-Ra said.

“You’re right. Oh my. Now that I think about it, I haven’t prepared a dress…” Yu Ran muttered.

The atmosphere was more peaceful than I thought. After Ito Sota died, our relationship with Celia had improved so I thought there wouldn’t be any other issues. The people from Taiwan were pretty brazen, but it was probably because Cha Hee-Ra had scolded them back then. However, the reason didn’t really matter.

‘It could also be because it feels like we’re all part of the same group… ’

Our opinions may be different, but Lindel, Celia, and Dawan were all part of the Holy Empire Benigoa. Basically, we shared the same fate. As long as no one was crazy like Ito Sota, I was sure this scene was pretty normal.

“By the way, don’t you think that the Holy Empire is being ridiculous? All this time, they had never thought about doing this, but when the Republic announced the Republic’s General or whatever, they created the Eight Seats… Once this is announced, I think the Republic may end up announcing the Ten Zone or something,” Yu Ran started.

“It would be scary if that really happened…”

“The atmosphere seems really tense lately… I hope war doesn’t break out. I wonder if our shaman can see anything.”

“The atmosphere seems tense?” Kasugano Yuno asked.

“The Chinese and our members don’t like each other from the start, but it seems like they are being franker about it recently. Lindel may not know about it since you’re in the center, but since Dawan is adjacent to the Republic, we can see what’s going on,” Yu Ran explained.

“…”

“There have been a few fights,” she added.

“You guys fight every day, anyway,” Kwan-Wi commented.

“As I said before, I’m certain the atmosphere has changed compared to before,” Yu Ran repeated.

When I saw how serious they were while talking about it, I guess it wasn’t just based on some hearsay.

‘A war out of nowhere?’

Obviously, I was curious whether a war had really broken out around this time or not, but Kim Hyun-Sung seemed calm for now…

“Can you tell me the details?”

I confirmed that we weren’t exactly safe when I saw Kim Hyun-Sung asking with such a serious look. I had no idea what was going to happen, but war might break out. And it was then that a thought popped into my head.

‘Hyun-Sung hyung will protect me, right?’

I was sure I would still be safe in the arms of our lovely regressor.

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1. In the gaming community, a troll is someone who deliberately tries to disrupt, annoy, or otherwise cause problems for other gamers, so he's saying maybe he's the problem because he considers himself the weakest. ☜

CHAPTER 261
OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT (3)

Just like on Earth, Taiwan and China shared a complicated relationship. The majority of the Chinese people in the Republic still firmly believed that Taiwan was a country affiliated with them and obviously, the Taiwanese didn't think of them kindly. Since it was also happening here, the shock Dawan had experienced was expected. It was funny that they brought international relations from Earth to here, but since there were still anti-Japanese players in Lindel, it wasn't that strange at all. The Islamic players from afar were still fighting every day, and the Union of Kingdoms—where the European powers were located—was still bound by the shackles of their past.

The relationship between China and Taiwan was a bit more complicated. Since the tutorial dungeon in Dawan was close to the Republic, their interests were aligned since the Republic wanted to acquire as many tutorial dungeons as possible. In addition, Dawan's current location used to be the Old Republic's territory. And the Republic had been provoking Dawan thanks to this. The Chinese in the Republic claimed that the *'Taiwanese are our people,'* while the Republicans, including their president, strongly insisted: *'this area was originally our territory.'*

'It's a mess.'

Even before our arrival on the continent, the Benigoa Holy Empire, the Republic, the Union of Kingdoms, and the mixed races had long been embroiled in fights against each other. And even though they looked normal on the outside, they were rotten inside. As such, the news of war breaking out wasn't *that* shocking.

'It's up to the players, too… '

The group of leaders on this continent may be a complete mess, but I believe war wasn't going to break out anytime soon. And it was all because…

'These bastards aren't stupid… '

If they really were planning on starting a war, then they wouldn't have announced the Five Tiger Generals or the Eight Seats because dogs on leashes were often the

most aggressive. Of course, the ones shouting that they were the strongest wouldn't fight head-to-head. If I were the emperor of the Holy Empire or the president of the Republic, then I would surely never do something so stupid like showing my cards to the enemies. As such, an announcement like this was nothing more than an armed demonstration.

'Unless they're crazy, nothing will happen.'

However, I was anxious. War breaking out at a time like this…

'It's not good.'

I had just settled down and was just starting to spread my wings, so a war breaking out was something I didn't want to see. I kept on thinking about it while listening to the others as they exchanged opinions. Kim Hyun-Sung listened seriously when the Republic's constant provocation to Dawan was mentioned.

"It happened in Laios…"

"That's…"

"A neutral nation. Some South-East Asians, including Laotians, arrived there after they were summoned. Have you heard—no, I'm sure you've heard of it since it's right below the border…"

"I don't know the details, but I've heard of it," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Dawan's tutorial dungeon is right next to the Republic, and Laios is located in the south, so many people have been gathering there. It's the same for the Republicans, too," Yu Ran explained.

It was against the imperial law to fight in a neutral country.

"Of course, there wasn't a fight, but even if there were fights, they would be small skirmishes. The best they could do was argue like children while standing in front of a rare-ranked dungeon. However, the childish fights eventually grew bigger. The people that got beaten up would call their senior guild members and once they arrived, the other side would summon their seniors as well. A large-scale fight didn't break out, but if someone had pulled the bowstring back, then—*Boom!*" she exclaimed.

“You guys have always been like that,” Cheon Kwan-Wi commented.

“Maybe it’s a woman’s intuition or an archer’s intuition. If Miss Cha Hee-Ra was with me, I’m sure she would have felt something similar. I thought something was going to happen, so I almost regretted going out there without preparations,” she added.

“No one intervened?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“Someone did, which is why a fight didn’t break out and an official report was even submitted to the empire. I was told that they were going to submit an official complaint, but I’m not sure if they actually did it…” she mentioned.

Dawan was going through some internal hardships, unlike us who only fought monsters. It seemed like those types of issues happened there every day. In some ways, it may not seem like a big deal, but ignoring trivial signs like this would be foolish. As such, there were a lot of things I had to think about.

‘Should I visit?’

Naturally, I thought it wouldn’t be so bad to visit Dawan and Laios once. I had to know exactly what was going on over there, so I could make preparations.

‘Smartie will throw a big tantrum again… ’

Maybe I could take my griffon and make my visits as short as possible. Time passed as they continued talking, and in the end, the conversation ended without any solution.

“I’ll take you to the audience chamber.”

It was time for us to meet the Emperor of the Benigoa Holy Empire. When Cheon Kwan-Wi’s adjutant opened the door after hearing the voices outside, we saw a retainer bowing. Cha Hee-Ra stood up and started talking and naturally, the retainer answered after bowing a bit longer.

“What’s our schedule like?”

“Nothing has been scheduled after the dinner with His Majesty. However, tomorrow morning…” the retainer paused.

"*Ah*, we just need to look good in front of the Empire's citizens, right?" she asked.

"*Ahem*…"

"Lead the way. I wonder if dinner will be short since we waited for quite a long while," she commented.

'Of course not… '

The dinner would last at least four to five hours. Eating with an ordinary noble usually lasted two hours at most and since we were eating with the emperor, I was sure it would be doubled. It hadn't even started yet, but I was already getting tired.

"*Ah*, I'm sorry, but I'll guide the adjutants to a different room," the retainer said.

"What?!"

Jung Ha-Yan unknowingly blurted out. I guess she was shocked when she heard that because she thought we would be together all the time.

"It won't take long, Ha-Yan. Enjoy your meal with Miss Ji-Hye and Miss Hye-Jin," I assured her.

"Okay, oppa."

"Let's go, Miss Ha-Yan."

"*Ah*… okay."

Because of the situation, she agreed without making a fuss.

'At least, she's being reasonable… '

The adjutants would spend time together and even though I was curious about the kind of conversation they were going to have, I didn't belong there. The waiting retainers led the adjutants to a different room and after Jung Ha-Yan checked my location a few times, she disappeared from my sight. Cha Hee-Ra looked as if she was already tired and as soon as Jung Ha-Yan left my side, Kasugano Yuno moved next to me. I guess she was imagining something nice because I noticed a small smile on her face.

Kim Hyun-Sung, Park Yeon-Joo, and Yu Ran were talking in front of us while Cheon Kwan-Wi was walking with Suzumiya Ibuki behind us. I guess he didn't want to be near Cha Hee-Ra because he was maintaining a few steps away from us.

When we followed the retainer, the scenery we saw was pretty fancy. Since he was the most powerful person in the Holy Empire, his class was on a different level compared to ordinary nobles. There were all sorts of gilded and gold decorations lining up the place, and the way to the audience chamber was fancy as well.

This was for the emperor of the empire. The nobles who enjoyed empty formalities wouldn't prepare events like this half-heartedly.

When the door slowly opened, I saw the gramp—Victor Hart—whom I hadn't seen for quite a while now.

'Is he the emperor's bodyguard?'

After greeting him with a nod, I started handing over my equipment. I heard Cha Hee-Ra talking to him, but I didn't bother to eavesdrop. I was sure he was telling her to either be polite or not to act rashly.

After the guards were done searching our bodies, the guards and retainers started guiding us and with Victor Hart in the lead, we walked on the red carpet again. We probably passed by three doors. And when the door I thought would be the last one opened, I saw the emperor waiting for us in his seat.

'What's that… '

I wasn't expecting anything grand because Cha Hee-Ra had already told me that he was just an old man who didn't have much and throughout my stay in the empire, I had never thought of the Emperor of the Holy Empire as a competent person. However, what I had seen was below my expectations. He was wearing a large crown, but I guess he didn't have the strength to wear it because he was shaking and his eyes seemed dull. However, when taking a closer look, his eyes were filled with doubt and spite that I became wary of him. He had a wrinkled face and a small body, and he seemed like he couldn't be further from being the emperor of this large empire.

'He's the emperor?'

If I was told that the woman sitting beside him was the empress, I would believe them and I had an inkling of her identity. When I activated Mind's Eye, I knew I was right.

'The Princess of the Holy Empire.'

There was a certain aura around her and her nature was *Calculative Innovator.* Her unique habit and stats weren't that bad either. Her eyes seemed like they were looking through me and she had the indescribable grace of a leader.

When I looked away, I saw the old man on the verge of dying.

"Everyone… please… sit…"

He sounded so weak that I didn't think he would be able to kill even a mosquito.

"We have met you, Your Majesty."

Everyone showed their respect based on what they had learned beforehand and when the old man saw that, he nodded with a big smile.

"I'm also honored to be able to meet the heroes… that represent the empire. I'm sure… you all know why I called you here. First… have a seat. *Ah*, before that… I should introduce my daughter, Charlotte," the Emperor said.

"My name is Charlotte, the second princess. It's nice to meet you," Charlotte introduced herself.

"We have met you, Princess."

"No need to be so formal. I'm already aware that you're not used to the etiquette of the empire. We didn't invite you here to make you feel uncomfortable, so please raise your heads," she ordered.

"Okay…"

"Yes, you're right. Good job… Charlotte," the Emperor complimented.

"Excuse me."

Everyone slowly sat in their seats and even though we started eating and talking, I couldn't hear any of their voices. The majority of the conversations were useless and they were mostly about heroes this and heroes that.

"*Cough… cough…*"

Aside from the emperor's coughing, I couldn't really hear anything else, and laughing at things that weren't even that amusing was tiring. I guarantee that the old man was the only person here that I could fight and win with my bare body.

'He's no emperor.'

Without a change in the government, the empire had no future. Not only that, but I even started wondering whether that old man was going to start becoming senile or start a war…

I kept having those thoughts, but…

A person like me was really weak against power. I unknowingly started bootlicking him because of his influence.

"As expected from His Majesty, the Emperor. Your eyes are filled with brilliance. *Hahaha*."

I noticed the others looking at me as if they were amazed.

CHAPTER 262
OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT (4)

It was easy to persuade people with power. It would take me some time to impress the princess, but impressing the dying old man next to her was a piece of cake. How he ruled the empire when he was still young, or what he had achieved throughout his rule was none of my business because I knew his current condition very well.

'A lame duck.'

Since it seemed like it was about time they declared a new emperor, the word suited him. There were actually some talks about a successor and the people who originally served the emperor had either changed their master or were looking for a different path. This was a so-called power leak. Of course, the emperor in front of us was still powerful because the old man was still the emperor of this empire. He still had a fixed number of people supporting him, and he still had the power to decide on his successor. Basically, he could keep his position for another three to five years, but the problem was how he felt about it. Even if this wasn't the case…

'I'm sure he feels like his power is weakening.'

If that wasn't the case, he wouldn't have called us here. His nature was a *Timid Man of Power* and it suited him pretty well. Powerful people like him pretended to dislike brown nosers, but they actually loved them. After all, no human would dislike people fawning over them.

'But I shouldn't be too obvious… '

If I just flattered him here and there, he would like me even more! And since a candle could still burn bright before it went out, I could still make a profit off this old man before he died.

"*Hahaha*. That's… a funny story…"

Despite it being a simple compliment, he already had a big smile on his face, and I could tell that I had made a good first impression.

“Now that I think about it… you’re an alchemist, right?” the Emperor asked.

“That’s right, Your Majesty,” I answered.

“I have heard a lot about you. I understand that you own many titles… *Hm*… I remember them. You’re also the person who helped in the development of alchemy in the empire… You also got chosen by a dragon, were you not? If I remember correctly… I’m certain of it… Charlotte?” he asked the princess.

“Yes, Your Majesty. Lee Ki-Young was selected as one of the Eight Seats and is the Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild from Lindel. He’s also the first person on the continent to get chosen by a dragon. And I was told that he was the first summoner to obtain an honorary position at the Vatican and is very close to Father Basel,” Charlotte explained.

“Yes, that’s right… The Vatican’s honorary bishop…” the Emperor nodded.

“I was just lucky that I managed to get in contact with Father Basel. *Haha*. Father Basel may have a short temper, but he’s worried about the future of the Holy Empire more than anyone else, so the fact that I was able to get in touch with him makes me very lucky,” I told him.

“Yes… I know that as well,” the Emperor responded.

“To be honest, I enjoy meeting new people, so I’m very close with the other nobles within the empire,” I continued.

“*Oh*, is that right?”

“I have a good relationship with people like Count Castlerock, Lady Caitlyn, and Lady Elise,” I added.

I had been maintaining a good relationship with the nobles from the emperor’s faction.

“And Mr. Victor Hart as well…” I said.

Victor Hart standing guard near the emperor looked at me as if he was asking what I was talking about, but I looked away from him and continued talking.

“It’s because he’s close to Miss Cha Hee-Ra…”

“*Ah*, is that right? *Hahaha*. Good. By the way… you said that the red-headed foreigner was like a daughter to you… right, Victor? Looks like my old friend has finally gotten a very good son-in-law…” the Emperor commented.

“E-Excuse me, Your Majesty,” Victor Hart muttered.

Victor Hart seemed like he didn’t really want anything to do with me, but he and I had a relationship that couldn’t be broken.

“*Ahh*, yes. That’s good…” he commented.

Now that he knew I was close to the people from his faction, it seemed that he liked me even more than before. However, when I recalled that the woman named Charlotte had told the emperor that I had connections with the Vatican, I guess I wasn’t really her type. I had to think about whether my bootlicking was too obvious or not. The emperor was important, but the princess was just as important as him. Of course, she seemed happy when I mentioned that I was close to the nobles from the emperor’s faction, but she still seemed wary of me.

‘I have a lot of time.’

As long as I focused on the emperor in the meantime, what she thought of me shouldn’t matter that much, and I guarantee that the time when the princess needed me would come, as I was already at the center of the Holy Empire’s communication group. Everyone would agree that being wary of me would only be a loss for the princess and if that woman was interested in becoming the successor, she would need me even more.

“By the way, the princess’s beauty has blinded me. Seeing that she’s full of radiance, I’m sure anyone can tell she inherited your blood, Your Majesty,” I commented.

“You’re right. My Charlotte is beautiful,” the Emperor agreed.

“It’s all thanks to you, Your Majesty,” Charlotte said.

“Yes, you’re right…”

It was funny how he immediately agreed to my compliment. Even though my

compliment was for the princess and not for him, it seemed like she wasn't used to this kind of praise, and I was starting to understand what type of person she was.

'I'll have to invest some of my time to get close to her... '

The problem was if I would be able to see her again after tonight, but I thought that I should have some time left.

As the dinner continued, we exchanged different conversations, and obviously, I wasn't the only one who received questions because to the emperor, all eight of us were subjects he had to take care of. The others answered the emperor's questions sincerely and this nice atmosphere was maintained throughout the dinner, but the emperor himself seemed more interested in me.

The Eight Seats of the continent were basically the leaders of each group and it was natural for them to be on top of others. The level of praise they were giving the emperor was different from mine since I was born to be a brown noser. I had to think about whether I should be proud of it or not, but I wasn't embarrassed because this type of worldly wisdom was necessary to survive in society.

Anyway, even after having a decent amount of conversation with the others, he expressed that he wanted to continue talking to me. Even the other seven members seemed like they wanted me to entertain the emperor. Cha Hee-Ra, Suzumiya Ibuki, and Cheon Kwan-Wi especially looked like they didn't care about becoming close to the emperor. Seeing that they were quietly thanking me, I guess there were people who didn't like this kind of meeting.

Surprisingly, Kim Hyun-Sung seemed like he was focused on the princess and since it was difficult to read his expression, I couldn't tell what the princess was like in his past life.

'Will she be the next empress?'

It was very likely that it would happen, and it was evidenced by the fact that the emperor had brought her here.

Anyway, as time passed, the tense atmosphere loosened up and when the emperor gave the order to talk comfortably, everyone naturally started talking. Of course, the sick old man focused on me as he started talking, so I didn't need to think of topics to talk about. He was actually the one asking me questions, so it made it easier for me

to answer. Usually, when the old man told stories about his days as a young man, people would exclaim and praise his greatness. As such, the emperor happily laughed as he continued to talk about topics that could confirm his greatness. However, being a good talker alone wasn't enough. Even while sympathizing with the emperor's story, I had to find topics so he would remain interested in me. That was how you could win someone's favor, and it wasn't that hard to do. Even my one-year-old Smartie would know exactly what people like him wanted.

"Elixir. *Hm*, did you say an elixir?" the Emperor asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty. I don't know much about it yet since I still haven't achieved that much in this field, but to those who study alchemy, it's a potion that has been told for generations along with the Sage's Stone. In addition to curing all sickness and injuries, it's also a gift from god that will help one find their youth," I replied.

"*Haha*, I see. Have you… made any progress in your research?" he asked.

"Unfortunately, no. It's an item only known in stories and to be honest, achieving results in a short period of time is almost impossible," I answered.

"*Hm*, thank you for being honest with me," he said.

"Maybe I shouldn't have brought it up," I told him.

"No, it's not that. I actually like the fact that you're being honest with me. You're, *hm*… kind of different from the other nobles," he added.

"I apologize," I said.

"I'm not scolding you, so no need to apologize. *Hm*… so this elixir…"

This was what I meant. I didn't need to give him false hopes about the elixir. Rather than him telling me later that I had been trying to fool him or whatever, coming out clean and telling him that it was impossible would give me a better advantage. People like him would usually show interest despite knowing the impossibility.

"If I had to guess, I believe the elixir is a potion that can turn the Sage's Stone into a catalyst. Of course, we still don't know much about the Sage's Stone, and naturally, it's one of my long-cherished wishes," I informed him.

"*Oh*, I see."

"I'm sure creating an elixir or seeing the Sage's Stone is the dream of every alchemist, and I believe it'll come true someday. I had never even imagined that I would get chosen by a dragon just a few months ago, so someday…" I paused.

"*Hm*, you're right. By the way, you mentioned that you got chosen by a dragon… I have never seen a dragon before in my life, so I had been hoping that you'd come with the dragon, but it's a pity," he mentioned.

"I understand. I'm sure you're aware, but a dragon is a being I cannot control…" I explained.

"You're right. It's not an exaggeration to say that they're above humans," he said.

"However… there is something I can show here. Of course, it's not a full dragon," I warned.

When I threw the bait, the emperor looked at me with eyes full of curiosity. Victor Hart tried to intervene, but when the emperor reacted sternly, he quietly sat back down.

"Please don't do anything foolish…"

"No, Victor Hart… the Honorary Bishop Lee Ki-Young isn't that type of person," the Emperor told him.

"I apologize," Victor Hart said.

I wasn't sure why the emperor described me that way when this was our first meeting, but the sudden increase in his confidence in me wasn't something for me to be sad about.

"So… how can I see a dragon?" the Emperor asked.

It was better to show him than to explain.

"I'll take that as permission. Excuse me for a moment, Your Majesty," I said.

When fireworks crackled from my hand, a dragon's face slowly started to appear

from a wall in the spacious living room. Along with a crackling sound, the dragon's head gradually took form, but anyone could tell that it looked a bit unrealistic.

"*Roooooooar…*"

Even though I had downgraded it so it could fit the room, anyone could still tell that it was a black dragon based on its large eyes, intimidating teeth, and large horns. The emperor, the seatholders from the other cities, and even Charlotte watched with their jaws on the floor.

It was a childish show. It wasn't even necessary to mention that Jung Ha-Yan's magic was more useful than my skills on the battlefield. Moreover, if Kim Hyun-Sung swung his sword *genuinely*, then I was sure the dragon's head would get cleanly severed. Still, it was undeniable that the alchemy skill I had just revealed was visually appealing.

"*Ha… haha…*"

The emperor quietly laughed.

"H-How did you d-do something like this…" the princess stuttered.

She was at a loss for words.

"It's alchemy," I answered.

This was just a small show to prove my worth.

CHAPTER 263
OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT (5)

"You have outdone yourself," Cha Hee-Ra said.

"*Huh?* What are you talking about?" I asked.

"Yesterday," she replied.

"*Ahh*."

"I can understand the old man's mouth dropping, but I was surprised when I saw the princess's mouth drop as well," she told me.

It definitely felt that way. I couldn't see the princess's expression because I was focused on the emperor, but I recalled how she stuttered with wide eyes. Obviously, the emperor's expression was more dramatic and it had been so exaggerated I was worried his heart was going to stop due to the shock. After the short demonstration, people started asking questions. Even though the people here were used to magic and holy power, I figured it was interesting to see a being like a dragon being created. Of course, what I created wasn't an actual being, but it seemed like it looked real to them because I could clearly remember them rubbing their eyes. The emperor wasn't the only one surprised.

It seemed like Suzumiya Ibuki had heard about me from Kasugano Yuno, but the attitude of the two from Dawan noticeably changed. After all, I had basically proven to them that I ended up here not just because of pure luck. The mage Cheon Kwan-Wi, continued to ask questions after dinner and the archer Yu Ran, kept on giving me strange looks, which embarrassed me.

Of course, the emperor's reaction was more important than their gazes. Maybe it was because I had laid down the bait, but after our dinner, he expressed that he wanted to speak to me alone. In addition, he even said that he wanted to support alchemy. I made all those happen within five hours, which was a great achievement even for me.

'Awesome!'

I didn't really need support since I had a lot of money, but I was really interested in the catalyst that might be stored in the treasury. To receive imperial support; no, the support of the Holy Empire, it would be rather strange if I wasn't excited.

"I was bored to death, but I enjoyed the show thanks to you. I'm sure some of them are even thanking you. Dealing with that old man is quite a nuisance," Cha Hee-Ra confessed.

"That's what people like you think, noona. It's not every day you get to eat dinner with the emperor, so if you don't make a good impression now, you may not get another chance. From my point of view, I actually don't understand you, noona," I explained.

"I just don't like it. I don't care if I don't become close to that old man. I think people like Yu Ran and Park Yeon-Joo think that it's necessary though… But do you really think they're doing it because they like it? You know… a thought popped into my head when I watched you yesterday," she said.

"What kind of thought?" I asked.

"This bastard is enjoying it," she replied.

"It's a compliment, right?" I questioned.

"Of course. It's like you were meant to do something like that," Cha Hee-Ra added.

"I won't deny it," I told her.

My heart kind of broke when I heard that I was apparently meant to be a bootlicker, but it was true that I enjoyed it.

When I turned my head out of embarrassment, I saw a crowd cheering under the royal platform. I expected the event to be big, but it seemed that they had put a lot of work into it. The cheering was loud enough to hurt my ears and seeing the place decorated with the empire's flag and the number of ornaments around made me think that they used a lot of gold.

The nobles sitting on one side were influential nobles representing the empire. I

noticed Lady Marilyn waving while staring at me, so I waved back.

My family at the Vatican was located a bit far from them. The pope wasn't there, but including Father Basel, there were three cardinals. It was Sister Jessica and Sister Helena, who barely appeared in public. I felt proud when I saw those I had a close relationship with attending this event.

'I should feel proud.'

"When does this start?"

As soon as I heard Cha Hee-Ra's complaint, I heard a loud voice.

"His Majesty, the Emperor, has arrived."

The emperor and Charlotte were walking on the platform. The only difference from yesterday was that a woman I assumed to be the first princess was with them. When I used Mind's Eye to see her status window, her information was displayed before me.

'Hm… '

Charlia, the First Princess of the Empire. And her nature was Self-Righteous Egoist.

'Wow… '

Even the emperor, who had holes for eyes, seemed to know who was more suitable for the throne between the first and the second princess.

'She'll never get it… '

Her wicked face made her look like a villain and her eyes filled with spite were on Charlotte, who was receiving the emperor's affection. Of course, her face was also full of greed…

[Unique Habit - Jealous Witch]

Even the system called her a witch, and I was sure there was a reason why her personality became that way. It was such a cliche that I wondered if an explanation was even necessary at this point. The second princess had to have received a lot of their father's affection, while the first princess received none. Sisters fighting over the throne was a story that many had heard before, and I was certain that they were fighting viciously over it behind the scenes. However, the fight shouldn't be *that* fierce, but if the emperor's health continued to decline or if an external element intervened, the battle for succession would surely appear.

I thought my unique habit might affect her, but just because she was a femme fatale didn't mean she would be loved by all.

'I think it's for the best if I stayed away from her.'

Anyway, the emperor walked out slowly with the first and the second princess by his side. It didn't take long for him to arrive and stand on the platform where everyone could see him.

"I think he's going to give a speech…" I said.

"Yeah. It's because this is his chance to put on a good act. After all, he created that Eight Seats or whatever just to do that."

I had to agree with Cha Hee-Ra. As expected, the emperor's voice was loud thanks to the voice amplification magic, but honestly, the speech wasn't that great.

'It's really boring.'

His voice didn't have the power to draw people in, and his speech reminded me of the long speeches principals often gave, making it unbearable. To say I couldn't help but yawn was the most accurate expression to describe his speech.

"My beloved people of the Holy Empire. We have all gathered here…"

I had to have heard *"My beloved people of the Holy Empire"* about twenty-three times now.

"Today… the great power of the empire…" the emperor continued.

And I had heard *"The great power of the empire"* about thirty-five times now. When it

was getting harder for me to endure it, I smiled when I noticed that his speech was about to end.

“Now, I would like to introduce… the shields that will protect the empire, and the swords that will punish the empire’s enemies… I would like to introduce them to the proud citizens. The black-haired foreigners made numerous contributions to the development of the empire, and the ones I name will be appointed as the Holy Empire’s Eight Seats,” the emperor announced.

“*Uwaaaahhhh!!*”

Obviously, the people cheered loudly. I wasn’t sure whether they were cheering because the emperor’s long speech was finally coming to an end or if they were cheering for the Eight Seats, but there was a high chance it was the former. The emperor nodded in joy at their cheer. He then continued talking, but this time, it wasn’t a speech.

“Cha Hee-Ra, the First Seat of the empire.”

Cha Hee-Ra next to me stood up and headed toward the platform.

“I’ll be going first, darling,” she said to me.

“Alright.”

As she confidently walked in front of the crowd while wearing her flashy armor, her red hair caught my attention.

‘She looks amazing.’

Her image was very suitable for the crazed crowd. A soldier introducing Cha Hee-Ra in the emperor’s stead shouted her achievements as loudly as he could. I found myself blushing while listening to her achievements, but I believe it was necessary.

‘Even if the presentation is a bit excessive… ’

I thought it would have been better if it was simpler, but this wasn’t too bad since it was created for this event. The emperor achieved a publicity effect that was more than he wanted and since the crowd was excited, there weren’t any problems.

When the other seatholders after Cha Hee-Ra started walking toward the platform, the people cheered.

'I think know why they're doing this... '

As time passed, I couldn't help but think…

The public was thirsty for power.

"Kasugano Yuno, the Third Seat of the empire."

Kasugano Yuno was after the Mist Summoner Cheon Kwan-Wi. It seemed that she wasn't that used to this kind of event because she started walking with a stern face.

"Park Yeon-Joo, the Fourth Seat of the empire."

The crowd cheered.

"Yu Ran, the Fifth Seat of the empire."

They cheered once more.

"Suzumiya Ibuki, the Sixth Seat of the empire."

And…

"Kim Hyun-Sung, the Seventh Seat of the empire."

The lovely regressor stood up and headed out. Even though he was wearing light armor, his steps were bold as he walked. The empire flag fluttered as the wind blew and the strange vibe that captured the people's attention intensified.

'You're picture-perfect, Hyun-Sung!'

I wasn't sure whether it was a coincidence or not, but the clouds in the sky cleared and the sunlight started shining down upon him.

'What a perfect scene!'

Earlier, I thought all this was a bit excessive, but now, it seemed fine. The people

cheered even louder, and of course, it was no exception when it was my turn.

“Lee Ki-Young, the Eighth Seat of the empire.”

I tried to walk as confidently as possible, but I couldn’t portray the same image the other members had, and to make things worse, I almost tripped, but their cheer was pretty loud.

“He’s the Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild representing the Free City of Lindel and was chosen by a dragon. He’s the Holy Empire’s Honorary Bishop and one of the thirty continental guardians who had saved the continent from destruction. He’s an alchemist who not only represents the empire, but…”

I had a lot more titles than I thought and I would have even more if the unofficial titles were added on top. They announced ridiculous titles like Extraordinary Genius and Genius of Strategy and Resourcefulness, but they were part of the publicity strategy…

‘So, it’s worth overlooking it… ’

The people behind this event had decided to give me the brains of the empire image. The only thing I had achieved was blocking the monster wave at Castle Rock as well as assembling the troops to do so, but since the Republic’s Five Tiger Generals had a similar formation, they probably wanted to make sure things were balanced.

‘Not bad.’

They did kind of lie, but there was no reason for me to reject their words when they were labeling me as a genius. It was the position I wanted in the first place and even if I weren’t all that great, what they had done would still make me look amazing.

“*Uwaaah!!!*”

The crowd’s cheer was really loud as the members waved. The emperor, the planner behind all this, and us, the event participants thought that this event ended perfectly, but the only issue was that there were other events after this one. After leaving the platform, we got placed in a parade, and after shaking hands with the imperial representatives, we still had to go to a party with the nobles and attend other events, which filled our schedule to the brim.

‘Do we really have to do all this… ’

It was pretty fun at first, but as time passed, I felt like my body was going to reach its limit. And that was when the old emperor came up to me and lifted my hand high. Naturally, the people cheered and the old emperor patted my back.

‘This old man really likes it when people fawn over him.’

I was sure there hadn’t been many emperors who openly showed that they liked brown-nosers. I wasn’t sure why, but Father Basel was shocked when he saw us and he slowly made his way over to me.

‘This wasn’t really what I wanted… ’

I hadn’t planned any of this. Receiving affection from many people was great, but if this continued, I would most likely make enemies as well. As expected, I was right. I felt Charlotte’s gaze as she looked at me with dissatisfaction, but having the emperor on my left and Father Basel on my right made me feel even safer than I had expected.

‘I! Ugh! Drank! With them! Ugh! Ate with them! Went to a sauna with them! Okay! We did everything, punk!’[1]

A line I had heard from somewhere kept replaying in my head.

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1. It's a famous line from the Korean movie "Nameless Gangster: Rules of the Time” ☜

CHAPTER 264
CHARLIA, THE FIRST PRINCESS (1)

Winning a person's favor was easier than people thought and having an interpersonal relationship wasn't as difficult as most people thought. It was essential for us to have a meal and go to a sauna together, but what was more crucial was how much I could adjust for others.

What the other party liked, what kind of story they loved, and what they wanted to hear—thinking about how to adjust for them while talking was important. In the beginning, there was no need to resist or assert your opinion. If the other person was conservative, then play along and listen to them as a conservative. If the other person was the type to make progress, then listen to them as the same type and play along. That was really all you had to do. If the other person supported the death penalty, then all you had to do was prepare the appropriate information and the things they wanted to hear. It would be even better if the information were specialized and detailed. You could raise your voice when talking about why the death penalty was necessary and in the middle of a heated debate, you should strongly agree with them.

'Ah! We get along better than I thought! We think alike!'

That would be what the other person would think. Of course, I had my own beliefs, but those weren't important. Even if I was against them, there wasn't a need to tell them that and I was sure the majority of people will fail here. After all, they would either get angry or stop talking about it.

If I wanted to tell the other person about my opinion, then I just had to invest more time into them without getting angry right away. The moment they recognized you as a friend and comrade with the same opinion and someone they could get along with, then you could start expressing your *true* opinion a little bit—just a little bit.

Incompetent and indifferent people wouldn't respond to important changes that were slowly happening around them. This was how you could get close to people, as well as control those in power.

'Father Basel... '

I had to invest a lot in him by spending time with him, sympathizing with him, and nodding to his words to make him happy. I scratched his back and talked about many things. To have a conversation with him, I had to study beforehand. I had to be proficient in theology, heresy, and demonology, which caused me to study a lot longer so that I could catch up to his level of knowledge. It took me several months to build a bond that couldn't be broken and naturally, I expected to take the same amount of time with the emperor as I started putting effort into him.

However, it was more effective than I imagined. Cases like this did appear sometimes. No matter how hard you tried to get the other person to like you, you still couldn't get close to them. Even before you could think about your topics and each other's nature, you could already feel as if both of you were out of sync as human beings. Obviously, the old emperor was the complete opposite of that. Basically, he and I were completely in sync. This emperor wanted the perfect brown-noser, and I met that requirement a hundred percent.

'Nice... '

He was a soulmate different from Lee Ji-Hye.

It was to the extent that I started to feel uncomfortable because he kept on talking to me. When the Eight Seats of the Empire's parade ended, and the party started, he still looked as if he wanted to keep talking to me. I was certain that if he didn't have to worry about the other nobles, he would have stayed beside me. The old man had a lot of duties and things to do. He had to talk to the powerful nobles and also form a relationship with the members of the Vatican, so of course, he was busy.

Obviously, the eight seatholders were busy as well. We would always get a lot of attention during gatherings like this, but today was the first time we got *this* much attention. The Free Cities of Lindel, Celia, and Dawan were within the Holy Empire's territories, but people were strongly aware that they were independent regions. The same could be said for the powerful people controlling those cities. Indirectly, they had a lot of influence on the empire, but engaging in direct activities with those people was impossible for the nobles back then. However, since the situation had completely changed, the influential nobles naturally started talking to us. Being a seatholder meant we had a bit of power over the Holy Empire's politics. Half of the nobles in the emperor's faction or those sensitive to changes had probably become

even more sensitive thanks to today's event.

"*Hahaha*. It feels as though the people are still cheering."

"It's understandable. Most adventurers in the Holy Empire wouldn't suddenly become famous, after all…"

"Yes, you're right."

"I heard all the children these days have been reading the adventurers' daily logs. I even find the stories in the adventure logs from Lindel especially fascinating. It's as if I'm reading stories of heroes and warriors that appear in fairy tales."

"*Hahaha*. They're no different from heroes and warriors. The Eight Seats are already heroes of the empire."

"You're right!"

I couldn't help but laugh when I saw nobles running up to us just to say things like that. The seatholders were surrounded by at least seven or eight nobles, and even though the party had just started, they already looked tired. Cha Hee-Ra was way over there talking to the nobles around her, and even though she was smiling, I knew better than anyone that she was on the brink of snapping. Park Yeon-Joo was skillfully leading the conversation, while Kasugano Yuno was calmly listening to their stories. It was the same for the lovely regressor.

'Did he learn noble etiquette, too?'

His hand and body gestures definitely made it seem that way, and he was obviously putting in more effort than usual. I also learned many things while spending time with the noblewomen, but I couldn't act as naturally as Kim Hyun-Sung.

'He must have worked hard in his past life… '

When I had that thought and turned my head, a blond-haired noble continued the conversation.

"My daughter has been begging me to buy her your adventure log, Brother Lee Ki-Young. She's usually a troublemaker, so it's interesting seeing her become quiet as soon as she holds a book… *Hahaha*."

'He's good at lying.'

But since he was trying to gain my favor through flattery, I thought it wouldn't be bad to play along.

"I'm very honored, Baron Nabot. *Haha*. Would it be alright if I visited your estate when I have the time? I'm not sure when that will happen, though."

I wasn't planning on visiting him, but there was nothing wrong with doing a bit of lip service.

"*Ahh!* I'd be grateful if you visited! I'll be sure to make preparations," he said.

"If I remember correctly, the estate you're governing is… Garcia in the east-west area…" I added.

"I'm honored that you know, Brother Lee Ki-Young. It's honestly a small and insignificant land, but we have a beautiful lake called the Mirror Lake, and people enjoy riding their boats there during fall. I'm certain you'll make nice memories if you come with your lover," he explained.

"*Ah*, is that so?" I asked.

The baron said that because Jung Ha-Yan was next to me. Even though Jung Ha-Yan was displaying a business-like smile, her fists were clenched, and she looked like she was asking me to go with her.

"*Ah*… I have been there before. It was a beautiful lake, and it looked like a mirror reflecting the decorated sky… It was the place I visited every year when my husband was still healthy."

"So you've been there, Lady Caitlyn." I pointed out.

"Yes, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I'm sure you won't regret going there," she said.

"Seeing that all of you are saying good things about it, I'll probably rush over there next year. *Hahaha*," I laughed.

Of course, I wasn't thinking about actually going there. It would be different if a treasure were hidden in Mirror Lake. Unfortunately, I didn't have the luxury to travel

that far just to go sightseeing.

'The mood is pretty nice.'

The discussion of war the Eight Seats had yesterday felt as if it never happened and seeing the nobles enjoying themselves made me feel as if the topic of war was another country's problem. I couldn't help but think that those with power were usually like this. In addition to raising their glasses to clink with the others, their laughter also filled the banquet hall, while the noblewomen flaunted their luxury goods. Some of them were discussing the future of the empire, but they had to have had a few drinks because their faces were red.

'Armchair philosophy is probably better.'

Discussing the empire's future while drunk was ironic and if some of the intellectuals of the empire saw them, they probably would have clicked their tongues and pointed their fingers at them. Of course, that was only if they could survive the consequences.

'It doesn't really have anything to do with me.'

There were a lot of things I had to take care of other than the future of the empire. At this point, the fact that Princess Charlotte was wary of me bothered me more than the empire's future.

'Did I act too much like a brown-noser?'

Fawning over the emperor just to win his favor was probably the reason why she was wary of me, and as I mentioned before, it was also the side effect of the emperor liking me too much.

'I don't think I'll be able to get close to her… '

Before thinking, *'we don't think alike,'* it was more like we were out of sync. Apart from our nature, I was under the impression that she was the type of person I couldn't get along with. As the successor to the throne, I would probably have to do my best to get close to her, but it meant I would have to invest a lot of time.

'I can try again after some time passes… '

While I was thinking that, I heard a *splash* and a loud voice.

“I-I’m sorry. I-I’m sorry.”

‘What’s going on?’

There was an accident not too far from me. A maid kept bowing her head, and the woman in front of her kept huffing and puffing as if she was angry. I instantly knew what was going on.

‘The First Princess Charlia.’

The maid must have tripped because wine had spilled on the white dress she was wearing. The drunk first princess embodied the wicked villainess role as she slapped the maid’s cheek again and again. Even worse, she couldn’t even hold herself up properly.

‘Wow… ’

“You bitch… How dare you!” the first princess shouted.

“I’m sorry, Your Highness. P-Please kill me…” the maid stuttered.

“Bring me a sword. I don’t think this anger will go away unless I cut off this bitch’s head right now. Hurry! Did you not hear what I said?!” she yelled.

‘She’s a completely crazy bitch.’

Even if she was drunk and it wasn’t her fault, showing that side of herself would negatively affect her. I understood very well why the other nobles hadn't been gathering around her.

‘Does she have Intermittent Explosive Disorder or is she just an idiot?’

When I saw her nature and habit, I knew she was a lost cause, but seeing her attitude made me even more certain of that. A few knights and nobles tried to stop her, but the situation was already out of control. The wasted first princess was making a fool of herself and this surely happened often because the emperor shook his head while clicking his tongue, while the Second Princess Charlotte, was doing her best to fix the situation. And it was then that something interesting caught my attention.

“It’s a total mess. This…”

As soon as I used Mind’s Eye on the maid who kept on apologizing, my eyes widened at the information displayed before me. She wasn’t anything special, but there was definitely something strange. It was her stats—they were above 60 points.

‘A woman like her tripped?’

I could guarantee that something like that was impossible even if the sky collapsed. I couldn’t help but think that she intentionally spilled the wine as part of her goal. And the goal may be something like ruining Charlia’s image. It had to be the work of someone who wanted to make the crazy bitch look even crazier, and the culprit was obvious.

‘Charlotte.’

The reason was simple.

‘She’s greedier than I thought.’

A hidden fight for the throne had already begun a long time ago.

CHAPTER 265
CHARLIA, THE FIRST PRINCESS (2)

“Princess, please calm—”

“I ordered you to bring me a sword!” Charlia shouted.

“P-Princess!”

“Right now! Did you not hear me?! Is no one there?!” she yelled.

The angry princess couldn’t hold herself up properly since she was completely drunk. Since Charlotte knew Charlia’s temper, Charlotte basically started all this at the perfect time. There were many factors to dismiss this as a trivial incident. The first princess may look like a psychopath right now, but there was no effect without a cause.

‘She got completely scammed.’

Since this incident happened with the crazy princess out of control, I was sure Charlotte was yelling joyfully inside. I wasn’t sure if the culprit was Charlotte or if a noble under her was the cause of all this, but this situation was at the point where it was impossible to fix, and it was most likely what the culprit wanted.

As Charlia stumbled, she bumped into tables which made the food and the bottles on the table fall to the ground. The weak-hearted noblewomen screamed while avoiding the glass shards on the floor, while the nobles had no idea how to react. During all this, the unaware Charlia continued screaming to bring her a sword and the maid playing the victim role had acting skills that were just as good as Ahn Ki-Mo’s.

‘This is totally ridiculous.’

The most prestigious banquet hall in the empire had instantly turned into a place where thugs drank cheap rum. Of course, the atmosphere suddenly became heavy. During all this, this crazy woman’s father, the emperor, turned his head while clicking his tongue as if he no longer wanted to watch. Seeing that, I finally had an idea why

the first princess turned out that way. It was to the point where I was reminded once again of the importance of family education, which I had realized during the Smartie incident. Right now, the banquet hall was still filled with the drunk woman's screams.

"How dare you! You dare look down on me? Are you looking down on me, too?!" Charlia yelled.

"Th-That's not true, Princess."

"Then how come you're not listening to my order… *Ugh*…" Charlia paused.

"P-Princess."

"Let go of me. Let go of me this instant," she ordered.

"You seem a bit drunk, m'lady…"

"I'm not drunk," she replied.

"P-Please calm down…"

Baron Nabot next to me seemed distressed, so I started talking to him. Since I wasn't that knowledgeable about the first princess, I wanted to hear the details about her.

"Baron Nabot, that lady is…"

"She's Charlia… the first princess of the empire," he answered.

I figured he wasn't bold enough to gossip about the princess because he kept his mouth shut tight, but I was able to assume just how bad she was just by looking at his distorted expression. The situation may have been different, but I was sure today wasn't the first time this happened. Even if all this weren't the result of the scheme that Charlotte or the nobles under her had made, that woman would certainly still cause trouble on her own.

As expected, a group of female knights appeared from one side, and while Charlotte was calming down the people at the party, she spoke quietly to the knights. Her words helped clean up the chaotic scene.

“The first princess seems tired. Please escort her to her room.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

“Princess, we’ll escort you to your room,” a knight said.

“Let go! Let me go now!” Charlia yelled.

Even though the knights had arrived, the first princess was still making a fuss, and it was to the point that I felt embarrassed about calling her a princess. I was sure that if an ordinary noble acted that way, they would have been subdued and on the ground right now. However, Charlia was struggling and refused the knight’s hand, so I was sure the knight was having a hard time dealing with her. It seemed like the knights were trying to be careful not to hurt her, but at the same time, it seemed like they were trying to drag this on as much as possible.

‘Are they trying to show us more… ’

If I were Charlotte, I would have made sure to delay Charlia’s suppression so that the spectators here could see just how much of a scum the first princess was. People weren’t outwardly expressing it, but it was obvious what they were thinking.

‘I can’t believe she’s a princess… ’

‘The future of the empire is dark… ’

And that was saying it nicely…

All of a sudden, the situation changed a little bit.

“*Ahhhhhhh!*”

“*Kyah!*”

The princess’s body suddenly tilted as she rejected the knights’ hands while stumbling. It was embarrassing how her body fell in my direction. The disloyal Baron Nabot ran away while releasing a strange scream, but I couldn’t leave my place.

‘Do I go along with it or not… ’

Many thoughts popped into my head, and they were about whether I should get involved or not.

'Still… '

Going along with it was the right thing to do. Many people were watching, and since there were many noblewomen in the crowd, I didn't think it would be a bad idea to prevent Charlia from making a fool out of herself. It was a lot better to show manners than not helping and since it could cause problems later, physical contact was out of the question. When I quickly snapped my fingers, a dragon's hand popped up from the ground along with a crackling sound. The dragon's hand caught Charlia as she fell.

"L-Let go of me!" the first princess stuttered.

She must have thought that a knight had caught her because the way she screamed was disgraceful to the point that it broke my heart. The nobles' eyes widened as they watched us and the struggling Charlia. While leaning on the dragon's hand, she eventually calmed down after running out of energy.

'Is she done?'

When I quietly approached her, I saw her slowly lifting her head. When I saw that, it made me think that she wasn't done yet.

"You're…" the first princess started.

"Are you okay, Your Highness?" I asked.

"Not bad. What's your name?" she asked.

"I don't understand…"

"I'm saying that you're pretty handsome," she answered.

I was at a loss for words.

'She's just digging a hole for herself.'

The way she talked made it seem as if she was talking to a male prostitute.

“I believe you’re drunk, Your Highness. I’ll escort you, so please don’t worry and sleep,” I offered.

“Alright then… Escort me. If I’m satisfied, I’ll pay you… handsomely…”

It seemed that she had reached her limit, as she started dozing off. I had an idea of how I could satisfy her to get a handsome reward. I couldn’t help but smile when I saw how the emperor, who had been looking away, was now looking at me apologetically. I figured he was ashamed of letting me witness such a scene because he took the initiative to talk to me.

“*Ahem*… I’m sorry you had to see that.”

“Please don’t mind me, Your Majesty. Everyone makes mistakes,” I told him.

“*Tsk, tsk…* I can’t even lift my head up properly anymore. Brother Lee Ki-Young… I’ll be sure to repay you for today,” he said.

“I didn’t do it because I expect something in return. *Haha*.” I laughed.

“*Ahem…* No, you should be rewarded,” he replied.

“I’m honored that I can be of some help, Your Majesty,” I added.

I figured that the culprit behind all this—the Second Princess Charlotte—thought that the situation ended pretty well because she was already busy cleaning up and taking care of the hall.

In the end, only one suffered a loss, and it was most likely Charlia, who was currently being escorted by the female knights. If she were sane, then I was sure she would ruminate about the mistakes she had made today when she woke up tomorrow.

‘Aside from the embarrassment, she’ll probably want to run away.’

Charlia had caused a scene while drunk at an important social event, and since the knights had escorted her away, I was sure she had left the worst impression on the influential nobles who had gathered in one place after a long time, the Eight Seats, and the members of the Vatican. Even worse, delegations from surrounding kingdoms had attended the social event as well, so she had basically shown everyone that there was no hope for her. Even though it was a scripted act, the victim could

have acted with confidence. If she had shown her generosity and pardoned the maid, then I was sure that she would have left a different impression. Charlia's first mistake was carelessly drinking wine and her second mistake was letting go.

'She shouldn't become the emperor.'

As a consequence, Charlotte's rating started to increase. One princess was an incompetent villainess, while the other had the qualities of a meticulous wise queen.

'It's a fight with such an obvious outcome.'

For the empire's future, it was clear who would be chosen as a successor. Even this dumb emperor, who kept talking next to me, seemed like he had already chosen the Second Princess Charlotte as his successor.

"I'm glad that Charlotte is doing well though," the emperor said.

"*Hahaha*. You must be relieved," I commented.

"Yes, of course. My only concern is that fool you saw earlier. I shouldn't have brought her with me today. *Tsk*…" he informed me.

"Everyone has dark times," I said.

"You're right, Brother Lee Ki-Young. Thank you for telling me that. Yes… I should think that way…" the emperor agreed.

The emperor talked about Charlia's flaws as if he was disappointed, but I knew he wasn't asking me to talk behind her back with him. Even though she was a disappointment, she was still his daughter and family. I thought that what he wanted to hear were words of comfort and as expected, I was right.

'Still, I'm sure he likes the second princess more.'

It was unfortunate, but it felt like the emperor had somewhat given up on the first princess.

And that was when the second princess started walking over to us. She walked up to us like a general who had just returned from a victorious battle and had already sorted everything out. The maid who spilled the wine was gone, and the floor was

already clean. The place was cleaned so perfectly that it seemed like the commotion from earlier had never even happened. When I recognized Charlotte as a competent person, my heart started to flutter without realizing it.

'Long live Empress Charlotte!!'

Although it was still fifty-fifty, I was ready to serve her with all my heart. I was sure it would take some time since we kind of started off on the wrong foot, but it would be worth it. When I was about to speak, I saw my darling glance at me as if she was looking at a cockroach.

"Thank you for…"

"Your Majesty, it's getting late. I think it's better for you if you turned in for the night," Charlotte suggested.

"I see. Brother Lee Ki-Young…"

"I'll thank him in your place. I'm worried about your health…" she interrupted.

"That's a good idea," he said.

I saw Charlotte's back as she escorted His Majesty while completely ignoring me.

'You obnoxious little bitch… '

CHAPTER 266
CHARLIA, THE FIRST PRINCESS (3)

"You were basically taming him." Lee Ji-Hye pointed out.

"…"

"That's why you shouldn't have overdone it. The emperor obviously likes you, so it's not strange for the princess to be wary of you. I think I have an idea regarding the type of person she is… Anyone can tell that you and she aren't a good match, Oppa. I think she actually dislikes you, which I don't really understand. How could she dislike someone like you?" she said.

I may seem like the friendly type to Lee Ji-Hye, but that wasn't the case for others.

"It was your mistake this time, Oppa. Of course, I had also never imagined the emperor would like you *that* much," she added.

"*Hm*…"

When the party ended, I met with Lee Ji-Hye for a bit and I could neither reply to her comments nor refute them. The plan Charlotte had been working on for a month or two was basically ruined in just a day, so it was natural for the second princess to be wary of me.

"Still, even she will find it difficult to push you away… You're a seatholder and considering your relationship with the other nobles and the Vatican, it'll be even harder for her to push you away. I think there's a good chance that she'll contact you when the time is right," she continued.

"After I'm done taming the emperor?" I asked.

"Probably. I don't think the princess is stupid enough to push people away just because she doesn't get along with them. If she's acting like this just because she doesn't like you, then she's no different from that idiot Princess Charlia. In that case, it'll be the end for the empire," she replied.

I nodded in agreement.

'Charlotte isn't that stupid.'

Aside from the things Lee Ji-Hye had mentioned, I was sure there were other reasons as well. The fact that I was maintaining close relationships with the other nobles had to be one of the reasons, as I thought that maybe she couldn't just stand by and watch me become more influential within the group. Charlotte was basically the next empress, and she knew that if she showed me favor, this human stock named Lee Ki-Young would go to the moon.[1] I had already shown many people that I had a close relationship with the emperor, and I was sure many people knew I was close with the Vatican as well, so she probably thought that I needed a suppressant of some sort.

'And she's the suppressant… '

She might also be thinking that I was sent by the Vatican. Even though the emperor and the Vatican lived within the Holy Empire, there was still a subtle power struggle between them. If I had approached the emperor with some kind of goal, then it was understandable for Charlotte to completely ignore me, but regardless, the main issue was with what Lee Ji-Hye had said earlier.

'Taming.'

It wasn't as simple as making the emperor do everything I asked him to do. Instead, it was making him do whatever I wanted by controlling him.

"You're going to feel quite frustrated, and I'm sure the political position you have will decrease little by little…" Lee Ji-Hye said.

"So, she's going to try to make me vulnerable," I commented.

"Well, I don't know about that… She'll probably do something that will make sure you don't become an eyesore and then she'll contact you. Honestly, you're too powerful for the princess to control you, so I'm sure she'll make her move after reducing your influence," she explained.

"How annoying… I don't know how long she's going to keep on doing it, and I also don't like the fact that she's trying to bring me down. I'm sure the Vatican and people like Lady Caitlyn aren't problematic, as their influence has been confirmed, but…" I

paused.

'I can lose more than them.'

"Are you worried that you might lose more than them?" she asked.

"You're right."

She knew exactly what I was thinking.

"*Hm*, I don't think she'll go that far. It may be better to meet halfway at the appropriate point. If you compromise now, you might earn something bigger later… Can't you win her favor by compromising once and then slowly bringing the princess down? Like a frog thrown in lukewarm water. You're good at that kind of thing, Oppa. Acting like you're on the same side and then backstabbing them," she pointed out.

"I'll take that as a compliment," I said.

Our thoughts were really similar, and of course, I agreed with what Lee Ji-Hye had said earlier. If I just compromised once and won her favor, I could change her so that she would do what I wanted her to do. I could retrieve the influence she had gotten rid of, and I could obtain even more power than before. However…

"But… you're…" Lee Ji-Hye paused.

"You're right. It's doubtful if I can even do something like that…" I said, finishing her sentence.

If the princess were trying to destroy or take away my conviction or pride, I would willingly give it to her, but if it were power or an object, I wouldn't be so sure if I would give something like that to her.

"I won't ever give them away," I told her.

"Are you planning on fighting the princess?" she asked.

"It doesn't look good to be hated by the next empress, so… I'll have to think of something. I still have some time," I replied.

"I expected you to do something like that. Is there anything I need to do?" she asked.

“Nothing. I still have to think about it. Let’s talk about this later. If I think of something later, I’ll tell you. It’d be great if you could come up with an idea, too. I’m already having a headache with this annoying problem. *Ah*, by the way, how was the food?” I asked.

“What food?” she questioned.

“You know, the time when we went to go meet the emperor and the attendants ate together in a separate room,” I answered.

“*Ah*… what are you curious about?” she asked.

“Did Ha-Yan adapt well to the situation?” I asked.

“She did well. She was good at talking… and she seemed kind of annoyed by the fact that she had to be apart from you… It was really depressing,” Lee Ji-Hye answered.

“Did something happen?” I asked.

“One of the attendants from Dawan was showing interest in Miss Ha-Yan,” she answered.

“What?”

“It was okay while we were eating, but after we were done, the man asked if they could talk alone while lightly touching her shoulder…” she paused.

“And then?”

“Well, he was crushed on the spot. I didn’t really know what it was since she used magic, but the space distorted and it broke the man’s arm with it. He was screaming, and I saw magic burning his arm… It’s a good thing that one of the attendants with him was a priest because if it weren’t for them, that man would have ended up crippled,” she explained.

“Why are you telling me this now…”

“Because we agreed to take it to the grave and I don’t even have time to spend with you, Oppa. After the incident, I noticed she was kind of shocked, and as expected, she didn’t tell you what happened. Anyone could tell this was going to be a problem, so

we agreed to pretend like nothing happened since he was at fault, too," she continued.

"It was a good deal," I commented.

"It's his fault for putting his hand on a woman, and he didn't want this issue to grow bigger since Lindel is the most powerful among the free cities. This is why it's great to have power," she added.

Jung Ha-Yan was under more stress than I thought. She never showed it when we were together, but the more we were apart, the more dissatisfied she was. I was thankful that Lee Ji-Hye was next to her, and she helped fix the situation.

'Since I don't have time to look after her… '

I was thankful to the point that I wanted to thank Park Yeon-Joo for bringing Lee Ji-Hye with her as her attendant.

'I think she's adapting well, too… '

Considering the fact that the majority of the attendants were powerful, she was doing pretty well among them, and it actually seemed like she was taking the initiative. It was really like her to act that way.

Lee Ji-Hye had to have realized that I was looking at her with a strange expression because she spoke while pushing one side of her hair back.

"Aside from that, nothing really happened. It kind of ruined the mood, but what can you do? Especially when the higher-ups are close. I'm sure the man will return to normal soon, and I think he now has an idea about what kind of person Jung Ha-Yan is because his attitude changed," she continued.

"That's a relief. If the issue gets worse, let me know," I requested.

"That won't happen, and you don't need to take charge… However, be careful when you talk to Miss Ha-Yan. It's fine if you want to fix it, but I honestly felt my heart drop," she informed me.

"Okay, I'll make sure to warn her," I said.

“That’s good. Anyway, we’re done here, right?” she asked.

“Thanks, noona.”

“It’s nothing. I gained something from it as well. Let me know if there’s anything I can help you with, especially ones related to the second princess. You need to figure out your plan so that I can decide on how I’m going to move,” she requested.

“Alright.”

“See you later, my love,” she said.

After getting up, Lee Ji-Hye kissed my cheek lightly and quickly ran out. I figured she was quite bothered by Jung Ha-Yan because she would usually talk about having a conversation with our bodies, but she didn’t do something like that this time. It seemed that the scene she recently saw got embedded in her head.

‘I can understand her shock.’

I was certain Lee Ji-Hye could recall Jung Ha-Yan’s expression better than that idiot man’s broken hand. The expression Jung Ha-Yan would show whenever she was filled with annoyance was something I still hadn’t even gotten used to despite being with her all the time.

‘I should say something to her.’

When I asked her about it earlier, I remembered her telling me that nothing happened and even though they had fixed the situation, she still lied to me, so it was only right for me to warn her. It did feel like I had recently been going easy on her. In the future, there may be more times when we would be apart, so it wouldn’t be bad to speak harshly while it was still early.

All of a sudden, I heard the door open and close. I immediately spoke, as I knew them.

“Come sit down.”

Naturally, my tone was different from usual. It would only be effective if I showed my anger from the start. Showing an attitude of uncertainty wouldn’t work on Jung Ha-Yan anymore since she had become pretty cunning. By now, I was sure she was

contemplating her mistake while hesitating about whether she should approach me or not.

“Didn’t I tell you not to lie to me?” I started.

I could feel that she was deep in her thoughts, and she must have remembered something.

“Actually, go stand in front of the door and answer. I don’t want to see your face right now,” I ordered her.

My heart would weaken if I saw her tears. I couldn’t really hear it, but I was certain that her tears were slowly rolling down her cheeks. However, I heard a voice that was completely different from what I had expected.

“*Um…* Mr. Ki-Young.”

“*Uh…*”

The visitor was Kim Hyun-Sung, not Jung Ha-Yan. I felt my face turn red in that instant. Kim Hyun-Sung looked at me while sticking his head out. He seemed like he was thinking that he had done something wrong, but when he saw my expression, he had to have realized that he misunderstood. However, he looked like he was thinking about whether it was okay for him to come in or not.

“I’m sorry, please sit. I thought you were Ha-Yan…” I started.

“*Ah*, it’s fine. I’m actually sorry for suddenly visiting you like this,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

We were both embarrassed, so it was difficult to make eye contact. In situations like this, it was better to get straight to the point, and Kim Hyun-Sung had to have thought the same because I started talking when I saw him nod.

“Did something happen…”

“*Ah*. Well… *hm*… I don’t know how to say this. I’m here to make a personal request,” he replied.

“I see. What is it about?” I asked.

‘I should do it since he’s asking.’

Now that I thought about it, Kim Hyun-Sung had never directly asked me to do something for him. I started to feel proud and curious at the same time because I had no idea what he wanted. It was also strange that he had a request at a time like this.

‘I wonder what it is… ’

Kim Hyun-Sung looked pretty serious, and the embarrassing atmosphere had disappeared. He looked as if he was going to continue talking, but at the same time, he looked like he was thinking. He seemed to be thinking about whether he made the right decision or not. However, when he started talking, I couldn’t help but look at him in astonishment.

“I want to stop the Second Princess Charlotte from becoming the empress.”

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1. Lee Ki-Young is comparing himself as if he was a stock in a stock market ☜

CHAPTER 267
CHARLIA, THE FIRST PRINCESS (4)

'What's this all of a sudden?'

Anyone would be shocked by such a request. I knew our lovely regressor was contemplating something, but I had never imagined he was thinking about it all by himself.

'Why?'

When I looked confused after hearing his comment that I couldn't understand at all, he realized what I was curious about, and obviously, he seemed like he couldn't explain the full details. And it would be strange if he answered, *"A lot happened in my past life."*

"I'm sorry, but please don't ask me why. I'll definitely pay you back…" Kim Hyun-Sung apologized.

"No, you don't need to pay me back for anything. I'm sure there's a reason why you're saying that. If it helps our guild or our party—"

"No, it's nothing like that. It's more of a personal matter…" he said.

He could have just said that it was for the guild, but seeing him draw the line by saying that it was a personal matter made me think that he was an honest guy.

'Tsk, tsk.'

Of course, it was a personal matter.

Charlotte was wary of me, but if we looked at the Holy Empire's big picture, making her the empress was the right thing to do. The current emperor was too weak to be called an emperor, and the First Princess Charlia was basically a lunatic. Personally, controlling the first princess was easier, but when it came to the empire's growth, I would vote for Charlotte no matter what.

'There's no need to have an event for it.'

Because Charlotte was basically the next empress. The first princess was the empire's troublemaker, and since there was a limit to who could succeed to the throne, I was sure the emperor was already thinking about making Charlotte his successor, so unless there was a twist to this situation, Charlotte would ascend the throne without any issues.

'And I'm sure it actually happened… '

It was likely that Charlotte became the empress in his past life. Actually, it wasn't just *likely*. Kim Hyun-Sung asking to stop her from becoming the empress basically meant that she became the empress in his past life. I had no idea why he wanted to prevent her from ascending the throne, but there were two possibilities.

'Did she become crazy?'

The first possibility was Charlotte becoming the worst tyrant in history. It was possible. Considering how she tried to bury Charlia, she wasn't exactly nice. Even though her habit and nature were closer to goodness, I figured she wouldn't hesitate to swing her sword at the people she believed were her enemies. Seeing that she had somewhat of a cold side, it wouldn't be strange if she became a bloodthirsty empress.

Since Kim Hyun-Sung wanted to make his second life a successful one, I was sure he didn't want the tyrant from his past life to take over this land once again. But after seeing his face, I had no choice but to push this assumption to the side. It was all because he didn't seem like he detested her.

'He could be hiding it… '

The strong feeling he gave was that he pitied her. The second assumption I could make based on that was that Charlotte's life as an empress would be a miserable one. Regardless of whether she was ashamed of what she had done or her final moment as the empress was a miserable one, she wasn't able to bear the weight of the crown. Charlotte may have regretted ascending the throne, and Kim Hyun-Sung witnessed her misery. There was no way for me to know their story, but seeing him asking for a favor without any ill will made me think that my second assumption may be the correct one. Otherwise…

'Did the first princess become the greatest and wisest empress of all time… '

No matter how much I thought about it, my third assumption couldn't be it. I noticed that the first princess was a stubborn and malicious crazy bitch. There was no hope for that fool. If my assumption were correct, then Kim Hyun-Sung would have said that he wanted to make the first princess the empress before telling me that he wanted to stop the second princess from becoming the empress.

My first and second assumptions had potential. I thought it wouldn't be bad to start the conversation.

"Did something happen that I'm not aware of?"

"*Ah*… something like that…" he replied.

"I see. This is my first time saying this, but Princess Charlotte was being hostile toward me as well. It'll be a problem if someone like her becomes the empress," I confessed.

"You're right. That's why," he said.

"I'll make sure she can't make a comeback…"

"*Ah*, there's n-no need for that. Just do what you can… I'll be satisfied as long as she doesn't become the empress," Kim Hyun-Sung stuttered.

'It's the second one.'

Kim Hyun-Sung was being kind to Charlotte. In her past life, she may have been a kind person despite being a bloodthirsty empress, but making this kind of assumption was meaningless now. The important thing was that Kim Hyun-Sung didn't want her to become the empress.

He looked worried that I was going to ask him more questions, so I decided not to ask anymore.

"I understand what you want. I also know it's difficult for you to answer my questions."

"Thank you for understanding," he said.

“No need to thank me. I have received a lot from you so far, so consider this as repaying you, and… we’re comrades after all,” I said.

“You mean…”

He seemed really touched.

‘Naturally… ’

The more he made requests like this, the better.

I had to come up with a plan, and I was thinking about what to do with Charlotte. I thought that it wasn’t bad since it felt like Kim Hyun-Sung had opened up a path for me, but thinking about quarreling with the second princess was giving me a headache. Before deciding whether she was an easy opponent or not, it was likely that we would get involved in a dirty fight and it wasn’t going to end well. No matter what, there would be conflict, and if I won this dirty fight, Charlotte would get hurt.

‘It doesn’t really matter to me though… ’

The problem was whether Kim Hyun-Sung was going to accept it or not, so naturally, I had to confirm it before I started working and when I spoke, there was a moment of silence.

“I’m sure you already know this, but it probably won’t end well.”

However, he seemed like he had already made up his mind.

“I know. I’ll leave it up to you,” he said.

He did look kind of sad, but it helped me make up my mind.

‘Charlotte is the enemy.’

It definitely wasn’t because I was holding a personal grudge. If it weren’t for Kim Hyun-Sung, it was most likely that I would have just played along with Charlotte. After all, it was a reasonable decision to make, and it would give me the most profit. It was all thanks to Kim Hyun-Sung that I was able to think that way, and I couldn’t stop smiling.

* * *

Thanks to him, my busy life got even busier, and it was obviously because I had to organize our discussion from yesterday. I had already informed Lee Ji-Hye of my plan, and as expected, she nodded without saying much. She did say, *"I knew it. That's the Lee Ki-Young I know,"* but it wasn't because of a personal grudge. I thought there was a bit of a misunderstanding, but it did make me feel comfortable whenever Lee Ji-Hye started working enthusiastically.

Obviously, she wasn't the only one busy. For some reason, Cha Hee-Ra also said, *"That's what I expected, darling. If you need anything, let me know,"* and offered to help me. Of course, Kasugano Yuno had also agreed to cooperate with me. The Blue Guild was one of the helpers as well. Kim Hyun-Sung was more eager than usual, and I was able to give Jung Ha-Yan a few tasks. During all this, I was busily moving around, trying to meet with the influential nobles. It was my usual schedule, but the information was different.

If my goal for meeting the nobles up until now was to maintain our relationship, the goal of this meeting was to use that relationship. Since I had been working hard by hitting the anvil with a hammer, it was now time to unsheath the crafted sword and swing it. Obviously, the crafted weapons had no idea of my enemy, but if they thew, I was sure they would have a lot of impact.

The second princess's position had long been determined and turning your back on her basically meant losing power.

'It applies to Lady Caitlyn and Count Castlerock as well… '

They may not want to get involved. Our relationship may be close, but being hostile against Charlotte was a burdensome thing to do especially if you were the head of a family. The Vatican would probably support me, but seeing that the imperial family and the Vatican weren't really involved with each other, my honorary bishop position was probably going to be useless.

'This is hard… '

Charlotte was currently unaware that I was against her, but she would know sooner or later…

'I need to plan it out carefully.'

I did think of a way. Actually, my decision was limited. It was to either infiltrate Charlotte's camp and act like a troll to completely divide her camp from the inside or…

'Turn Charlia into the empress… '

I didn't really like any of those choices, but I had no other choice.

'The other choice would be to rebel.'

I didn't want my head to go flying thanks to the guillotine, so there wasn't anything else I could do. Since Charlotte was wary of me, a rebellion was out of the question. In the end, I had no choice but to select the latter, and in some ways, this could bring disaster to the empire. I was certain Kim Hyun-Sung had considered this before asking for the favor. Asking me to stop the second princess from becoming the empress was no different from telling me to make the first princess the empress.

'Does it not matter if the empire falls?'

Maybe Kim Hyun-Sung was sure that I could control the first princess. Even if a Charlia faction was made, the issue was what would come next. The first princess would still be the empire's troublemaker, and many nobles had already turned their backs on her. She neither had a foundation of support nor the skills to back her up.

'It'll be more difficult than I imagined.'

It was an understatement to say that it was going to be difficult. And I had no choice but to select the surest choice. While I was on my way to meet Charlia who wanted to express her gratitude for the previous party, I couldn't help but think about how difficult it would be when I saw the faces of the maids around the first princess.

'Cra… Crazy… '

I found the answer when I saw faint traces of holy magic on the majority of the maids' faces. It was proof that the crazy first princess had slapped these maids, and when she received the news of my visit, she hurriedly called for a priest. Every maid I had encountered so far was terrified, and they were extremely worried that something would happen. It became painfully obvious how the first princess usually treated people beneath her, and I was sure that the maids on this side always had injuries. Back then, I could feel that she was a scummy person, but…

‘She’s just a piece of shit.’

I was somewhat nervous. I originally wanted to avoid a relationship with Charlia as much as I could, but at this point, there wasn’t anything I could do about it

‘I need to give it a try.’

“E-Excuse me… Your Highness. M-Mr. Lee Ki-Young is here.”

The maid had to be nervous because her voice was trembling. It was then that I heard a bright voice from the room.

“Oh yeah? Let him in,” Charlia ordered.

“Yes, Your Highness.”

Her voice was different from yesterday. It was still kind of sharp, but I heard some modesty, and I knew I wasn’t imagining it. When the door opened, I saw a fully-dressed Charlia waiting for me in the living room. I wasn’t sure whether it was because of her habit or not, but her eyes were filled with kindness as she looked at me. It was ridiculous how she started talking with a smile and a coy look. It was absurd to the point that I started doubting my eyes and questioned if she was even the same woman from yesterday.

“I’m Charlia.”

CHAPTER 268
CHARLIA, THE FIRST PRINCESS (5)

Charlia was definitely a beauty with her sharp nose and long eyelashes, as well as her long platinum blonde hair, which was considered a symbol of the imperial family. She resembled Charlotte, but it was most likely because they shared the same blood. However, some parts of her face were different. A person's face was a canvas that showed what kind of life they had been living and of course, my impression of her wasn't a good one. She was smiling, but her vicious face was still there. Honestly, the things she was wearing caught my attention more than her face.

'How much is all of that worth?'

My eyes went wide because she was decorated with all sorts of gorgeous jewelry. She was wearing a ring with a large gem and other rings with exquisite carvings. The small earrings she was wearing shimmered under the light from the window, and her necklace was so flashy I couldn't help but wonder if it was giving her a stiff neck. The necklace's embellishment was sitting in the middle of her chest. The dress she was wearing was extraordinary as well. I had never heard of the brand, but that made it even more valuable. I was certain the dress was made by a famous designer in the empire. The interesting part was that the upper part of her dress was very revealing, yet it didn't give off a sexy feel. Overall, her outfit did feel a bit excessive, but they fit her well. If she sold even one of the things she was wearing, she could feed tens of thousands of starving people, but I couldn't say that to her. When I realized that my greeting was overdue, I bowed and spoke.

"I'm Lee Ki-Young."

"I know you, Brother Lee Ki-Young. How about a cup of tea?" Charlia suggested.

"I'm fine with anything," I said.

"You heard him," she told the maid.

"Right away, Your Highness."

When Charlia looked at the maid, the latter answered with a shaky voice and left. The maid seemed like she was relieved to leave this room. In contrast, Charlia was fixing her hair as if she didn't care.

'She's pretty brazen as well… '

Even though she had basically made herself look like a fool during our first meeting, it was amusing how she was trying to act like a normal person. It wasn't that bad because she could differentiate between right and wrong—at the very least—but to the maids, I was sure they were confused.

Unlike my assumption that we would have to wait for a bit, the maid quickly brought a variety of snacks and two cups.

'She's really fast.'

The table had already been set earlier, but a few maids still gathered and started setting everything up. Betraying their anxious expressions, they moved like well-trained soldiers without making any mistakes. The surprising thing was that there was a lot on the table when we were just having *a cup of tea*. Despite the fact that there were over ten types of snacks on the table, the maids were still bringing in more. The maid filling my empty cup looked as if she was hoping the tea would be to my liking and the maid filling the first princess's cup was praying that she wouldn't make any mistakes. When I lifted my cup like I usually did, the maids in the room focused on me.

'I feel pressured.'

They obviously wanted to see if I liked the tea. If I said anything negative, those maids could potentially lose their heads. When I spoke while nodding quietly, I saw two maids placing their hands on their chests.

"It's delicious, and the fragrance is nice as well."

"I'm glad you like it. *Hehe*. I was worried you wouldn't like it," Charlia said.

"It's definitely a new experience for me, but I like it. It feels like it's calming me mentally and making me feel listless. I also feel my body warming up," I added.

"This tea was brought here from the Kingdom of Elves," she informed me.

"*Ah*, is that so?"

'Kingdom of Elves my ass.'

When my body started giving off strange signals, I quietly looked at the tea in my hand and saw the additives added to the tea.

[Rafflesia Petals - Average Rank]

'An aphrodisiac.'

I was at a loss for words.

'This crazy bitch.'

She summoned me here so she could apologize and express her gratitude to me, but her plan made me laugh. She used an amount that was small enough to go unnoticeable, but her goal was pretty obvious. My heart started to beat a bit faster, and the woman in front of me started to look even more charming. When I continued looking at her with Mind's Eye, I discovered that it wasn't only the tea that they laced with an aphrodisiac.

The fragrance coming from Charlia's body was also laced, and if I were to explain it, it was like her fragrance was starting to fill this large room up little by little. I wasn't sure if she wanted to spend some time exploring each other's bodies, but since she used this many additives, it meant that she *really* wanted me to look at her like a woman.

'Is she being influenced by it?'

I didn't think that all crazy women had been influenced by their unique habits, but it seemed like this princess really liked me. I was also sure that she heard that I defended her in front of the emperor.

'I can use her… '

However, I wasn't comfortable with this method. The additive didn't really affect me since my immunity to drugs was pretty strong, but the signal my body was giving off annoyed me. And the fragrance from Charlia's body kept on tickling me as well. In the looks department, she was definitely charming, and I even had the desire to kiss the lips on her menacing face, but I couldn't do that. I honestly didn't want to get involved with her unless it was for work.

In addition, Anemone's Eye suddenly popping up to watch me from above was really bothering me.

'I have so many things I need to worry about.'

It was a situation where I couldn't help but keep complaining. However, unlike me with many complicated thoughts, Charlia must have felt that things were going well because she spoke as she slightly lowered her head.

"I should have told you this first, but… I would like to formally apologize for my rudeness in the past, and I would also like to thank you for helping me after that incident…"

It seemed that she did learn etiquette seeing that she was talking to me as a member of the imperial family. I had no choice but to accept her apology, because to her, I was sure it was a shameful incident she wanted to forget. However, for us to talk more in the future, it would be beneficial if we were a little bit more truthful with each other.

"It's fine. There's no need to apologize, and I didn't do anything great for you to thank me. Everyone makes mistakes… and I'm sure you were going through some stuff. Actually, I understand why you were unable to contain your anger," I explained.

Charlia looked surprised, but I figured she couldn't agree with my comment and thought that she had to come up with an excuse. Obviously, that wasn't the kind of reaction I wanted from her.

"*Ah*, it's not that I couldn't contain my anger… I-I was too—"

"No, it's because the dress you wore to an important party got ruined, and the culprit was just a lowly maid, so I completely understand," I interrupted.

"No, I was going through some hardships at that time… To be exact, it wasn't that I couldn't control myself…" she muttered.

She was still acting coy. However, since she still couldn't figure out the point of the conversation, I had no choice but to be more straightforward.

"Princess, I'm not a good person."

"What do you…"

"It's like I said. Simply put, I'm a very bad person. Even if your maid's head went flying that day at that location, I wouldn't have been bothered by it. I'm a selfish person, and as long as the people around me and myself are fine, I don't really care what happens to others," I explained.

"…"

"*Ah!* I'm also like you, Princess Charlia," I added.

"What do you mean *like me*…"

"I'm also the type of person who has to punish those who caused me harm for me to be satisfied. I was certain that if the same thing happened to me at the party, I would be smiling on the outside, but I would probably have other thoughts," I answered.

"…"

"It's difficult to contain your anger. In a situation like that… if something annoys you, it's better to pay them back. It definitely makes you feel better to see the person who made you mad kneeling before you…" I continued.

It was amusing how she was still acting coy despite what I told her, but I expected her reaction. She was doubting my intention in telling her this and that wasn't the only reason. Even though it wasn't much, she had used an aphrodisiac, which meant that she liked me. However, it was especially hard for her to express her feelings to someone she liked.

"I'm a crazy bitch with anger management issues and an infamous fool throughout the empire, as well as a piece of human garbage. I'm also a princess with intermittent explosive disorder, and I view those under me as nothing but beasts."

Practically no one could introduce themselves as someone like that.

Charlia was still wearing her facade, so I became suspicious about how she easily removed her mask back then. In addition, this kind of conversation wasn't really suitable when it came to removing the mask she was wearing.

"I'm joking," I said.

"*Ah*… I have heard that you have a good sense of humor," she commented.

She was forcing herself to smile.

I quietly placed down the tea I was drinking and said.

"I know it's rude, but… I'll take my leave."

"What?"

"You apologized and thanked me for that incident, and I have plans with His Majesty as well," I told her.

"Y-You're leaving already…?" she mumbled.

"The more I drink it, the more I realize that the tea isn't to my liking… I'll make some time tomorrow," I said.

"*Ah!*"

When I stood up, she was shocked. And when I saw how her face instantly distorted, I couldn't help but think it was really difficult for her to control her anger. Of course, she would have a hard time controlling her anger. After all, the attitude I had shown just now was very rude, and no one would act that way before an imperial family member. However, the fact that she was still wearing her mask meant there was something else that annoyed her. It seemed like she was holding a grudge against the person who had ruined today's meeting, but that was none of my business.

When I exited after bowing to her, the maids waiting outside quickly passed me and entered the princess's room. The door to the princess's room was tightly closed, and the maids outside turned pale.

'They probably think that the meeting ended up in failure.'

A soundproofing spell had to have been used inside the room because I couldn't hear any noises from the room, but I knew what was going on. I was sure she was yelling and calling them names. If she wasn't mad at me, then she was probably taking her anger out on someone else.

After counting to exactly ten seconds, I turned around, and when I headed back to that room, the maids looked even more surprised.

"P-Princess Charlia!! It's Mr. Lee Ki-Young!" a maid shouted.

I activated the simple spell I had prepared beforehand.

"Silence."

"*Mmm!*"

The maid touched her neck when she found herself unable to talk.

"Y-You're being rude right now, Mr. Lee Ki-Young… If you'd like to visit the princess again, I-I have to let her know first," the maid said.

Crack! Crackle!

The dragon's tail that popped up from the ground covered the maid's mouth to stop her from talking.

When I opened the door to the princess's room, the scene I had been expecting was displayed before me. The first thing I heard was the princess's voice. Along with a *slap* that I had heard before, I also heard the scared and shaky voice of a maid.

"I told you to make sure not to make any mistakes when I have a guest… I told you several times! Didn't I?! Didn't I tell you again and again?! That he was an important guest?!" Charlia yelled.

"P-Please kill me. Kill me, Your Highness," the maid begged.

"Fine! If that's your wish… *Ah*."

It was ridiculous how this spectacular event took place not even a minute after I left the room. Out of the maids who entered, one of them already had a red cheek and

the maid kneeling on the ground was rubbing her hands together in fear. The princess looked confused and stumped as she stared alternatingly between me and the maids.

I spoke quietly in the silent room.

“It’s just as I had expected. No matter how much I think about it, you and I are the same, Princess.”

Of course, that crazy woman and I weren’t the same type of scum.

‘I wouldn’t say we’re the same. Definitely not. I’m not as bad as her.’

CHAPTER 269
LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER (1)

I saw Charlia's pale face, and she was obviously stupefied. She was wearing a mask that was unsuitable for her to make a good impression and since she had just exposed her true nature, her shock didn't come as a surprise. It was the same for the two maids. They had no idea what was going on, and from the beginning, there wasn't anything they could do other than tremble in fear. Charlia spoke to try and fix this situation somehow, but it would be strange if she managed to come up with a decent excuse. The situation was very clear, and she was even caught in the act.

"Y-You see, this… well…"

"*Ah*, don't worry. You don't have to explain. I just came back to ask if you wanted to have dinner together since it's almost dinner time. This is pretty awkward, so I think it'll be best if we get this place cleaned up. Please take care of those outside as well. I used a pretty violent method before coming in here…" I requested.

"*Ah*…"

"And I apologize for my rudeness earlier, Your Highness. When having a deeper conversation, I thought it would be better to tell each other our true feelings, so I had no choice but to do what I did," I added.

"Wait… no…"

"I'll take care of Her Highness, so please prepare the food," I requested.

When I helped the two maids up, I noticed their hesitation. They were looking at Charlia, and when the princess quietly nodded, the two ran outside.

"The tea was delicious," I commented.

"Th-That's a relief."

"Princess Charlia, you don't have to feel so embarrassed," I told her.

“Brother Lee Ki-Young, what you saw just now—”

“I already know. You were correcting the mistakes of those below you,” I interrupted her.

“*Ah*, yes. I was,” she said.

“As I mentioned before, I completely understand. There was a problem while serving the guest, so it’s only right that you be angry with them. If I were in your position, I would have been angry as well,” I continued.

“Yes, you’re right.”

“There are people who will understand by telling them once, and there are those who won’t understand no matter how many times you tell them. Since they didn’t listen to you, they should be punished…” I added.

“Brother Lee Ki-Young…” she paused.

“Yes?”

“You really do understand me,” she said.

“I do. As I mentioned earlier, we’re the same,” I repeated.

I saw how she fell into deep contemplation, and she must have finally realized that I was being kind rather than causing her harm. She had to have thought that it wouldn’t hurt to be a bit more honest, as I saw her looking at me cautiously. I was sure she was testing the waters to see how deep our conversation could go.

“There are many people who are lacking…” Charlia started.

“That’s because they’re different from you,” I told her.

“The majority of them are idiots…” she added.

“*Ah*, is that so?” I asked.

“They must have been born that way because they don’t understand if I say it just once. This wasn’t the first time they made me angry, so I’m always stressed out

because of them," she explained.

When I started reacting to her comments, she started talking more. The princess looked as if she had met an old friend because she was having fun while talking. Obviously, I didn't want to be a long-time friend of the princess, but it was easy to nod my head.

"*Hmm*, that's understandable. I can see why you did it," I said.

"Of course, it breaks my heart to act this way, but to discipline them—" she paused.

"It's necessary. There's nothing you can do about it," I said, finishing her sentence.

"Yes, you're right."

But I figured it was still difficult for her to stop acting coy. It seemed like she was trying to muddy the waters by bringing up the topic of discipline, but she was so honest that I couldn't compare her to the Charlia I had seen earlier.

During all this, the maids started serving food. Since they had been notified that we would eat here, they started preparing the table as well as the appetizers. The maids looked extremely nervous. Even though these maids weren't the same ones from before, their hands were still shaking, but since the princess was smiling, they must have thought it was going to be okay. I also thought that the atmosphere was peaceful.

"*Hahaha*. I've heard about you from my father," Charlia mentioned.

"I want to know what he said about me. I'm worried that His Majesty has been saying all sorts of things about me again," I commented.

"*Ah!* It's nothing like that. About the incident last time… He… he said you defended me…" she answered.

"*Haha*. I don't think *defend* is the right word. I just said what was right," I told her.

"I'm not sure if it was because of that, but my father made a request," she said.

"What…"

“To make the time to apologize to you no matter what… Of course, I didn’t call you here just because of my father. I wanted to talk to you again about my mistake at the party, and I also have a great personal interest in you, Brother Lee Ki-Young…” Charlia explained.

“*Ah ha…*”

“Talking to you like this makes me think that you’re a much better person than I originally thought,” she added.

It was starting to sound a bit ominous, and I was surprised that the emperor made Charlia make the first move. Of course, it was something she had to do, but I was worried that the emperor had something else in mind.

“I wonder what kind of interest you have in me… I understand you, though. The majority of the nobles have a big interest in summoners, especially now that I’m a seatholder… Did you manage to get your hands on the adventure log?” I asked.

“I was actually able to read the adventure log the Blue Guild released for a little bit yesterday,” she replied.

“*Hahahaha.* I’m honored. By the way, this is really a coincidence. I actually wanted to meet you as well, Princess Charlia,” I confessed.

“Really?” she asked.

“I wondered what it would be like to have a conversation with you, but who knew we would get the chance to meet like this? *Haha*,” I laughed.

We continued talking while eating. When I stopped talking and looked at the maid, she spoke as if she had been waiting. The maid looked as if there was something she had been wanting to say, so it seemed that I helped her speak.

“Excuse me, Your Highness. Your steak…”

“Rare,” Charlia answered.

“I’ll have it the same way as the princess,” I told her.

“Yes, sir.”

“You can bring the dessert an hour later. We have a lot to talk about,” I ordered.

“Understood.”

I actually preferred my steak well done, but I wanted to show that I was the same as the princess. I was kind of shocked when I was served a barely-cooked piece of meat, as I had no idea how to eat it. There was blood on the princess’s dish as she started cutting her steak. Maybe it was just me, but the sound of the meat being cut and its texture made it seem grotesque, but I looked at the princess and spoke as if it didn’t bother me. After cutting up the steak, Charlia spoke after the maids left the room. Seeing that she wasn’t eating, it seemed that she was curious about the conversation we had earlier.

“If… you don’t mind, could you tell me what kind of conversation you wanted to have with me?” Charlia asked.

“*Haha*. It’s nothing serious. It’s about this imperial family…” I answered.

“What?” she asked.

“Please don’t misunderstand. Princess Charlia, I’m nothing but a summoner, and I neither want to judge the imperial family nor do I want to talk about it. However, I’d like to hear your opinion about the second princess, Charlotte,” I replied.

“What do you mean…”

“There are rumors that the second princess is currently the influential figure controlling the Holy Empire,” I said.

“W-Who would say something so ridiculous?!” Charlia yelled.

“When the health of the great and wise emperor declined, it seemed like His Majesty had been handing over many of his tasks to the second princess. Many influential nobles have been supporting the second princess, and she’s actually very talented as well. Actually, I don’t want to sound like I’m insulting the imperial family,” I said.

“It’s fine. Please continue,” she requested.

“*Ahem*… We actually received many offers…” I continued.

It was a lie. We had never received any offers.

“C-Could you tell me the details? What do you mean by *we*…” she asked.

“*Ah*. This is information that had been secretly told to a few seatholders of the Eight Seats. It sounded like the second princess wanted us to support her after His Majesty passes away. I’m not sure if it’s okay for me to tell you this, but it seemed like she was hostile toward you, Princess,” I explained.

I wasn’t wrong. It still hadn’t happened just yet. Seeing that the second princess was trying to tame me, she was basically telling me indirectly to stand on her side, and Charlia looked as if she had no intention of revealing the truth. Actually, she wasn’t capable enough to reveal it. Charlia kept mumbling *“Charlotte… Charlotte,”* so I figured that she was really angry at her younger sister.

“So did you answer?” Charlia asked.

“We’re holding it off for now, but the Eight Seats are trying to avoid getting too close to the political side of the Holy Empire since they’re foreigners. However, Princess Charlotte seemed dissatisfied with our half-hearted attitude. She doesn’t seem like a bad person according to the rumors, but there’s so much fabricated information these days that it's difficult to tell which ones should I believe,” I explained.

“Yes, you’re right about that. Charlotte, the second princess… No, the opinions about that dirty prostitute are fabricated. Yes, it’s true. Everyone got fooled,” she confessed.

“What?” I asked.

“I’m ashamed to say this, but she’s a mischievous bitch. I knew we shouldn’t have adopted that illegitimate daughter as a princess since she inherited her mother’s lowly blood. Everyone was worried about it. It’s true. I knew she was *very* greedy, but it seemed that as soon as she became a part of the imperial family, she quickly bewitched my father and revealed her ambitions,” Charlia continued.

“*Hm…*”

“She said she wasn’t interested in men, but she had brought so many men into the palace. I could always hear coquettish noises every time I pass by her room to the point that it started hurting my ears. Like daughter, like mother, I guess. She would always smile in front of everyone, but behind that smile is inexplicable filth,” she

added.

I knew this would happen, but as soon as I mentioned Charlotte, Charlia's attention seemed like it wasn't on me anymore. Obviously, the short dinner time wasn't enough for her to vent all her anger. I couldn't help but find it amusing how Charlia kept on slandering Charlotte as if she was possessed. It was funny because it reminded me of the saying, *'the pot calling the kettle black.'*

"She deserves to die. A loach is defiling and harming the authority of the imperial family. I'm ashamed to see the faces of my ancestors. My father, I can't believe my father. How, how could he… cherish that dirty… more than me…" she stuttered.

It was ridiculous how she bit her lips while her fists were shaking. It felt like the peaceful atmosphere we previously enjoyed didn't even happen in the first place. Charlia's eyes were bloodshot, and she must have found it *really* unfair because she started crying. Obviously, she wasn't crying out of genuine and innocent care for the imperial family. It was simply jealousy. The headstrong Charlia was full of spite and anger toward Charlotte, who was enjoying the things she shouldn't be enjoying. Charlia felt inferior to someone who had managed to monopolize the emperor's life despite her lowly bloodline. The unjustness of it all made her cry.

Naturally, I quietly handed her a handkerchief, and after wiping her tears, she must have been surprised at what she had just done because she leaned back.

"*Ah…* I'm sorry," I said.

"You're… a kind person," Charlia commented.

'Huh?''

For some reason, that line sounded dangerous. I had a bad feeling that if this continued, we would end up lying down on the nearby sofa, so I quietly pulled my arm back and quickly changed the subject.

"It was nothing. I never thought that something like that happened. As expected, there are more lies than truths when it comes to rumors. *Haha*," I laughed.

"What?"

"To be honest, I have heard rumors about you as well, and the majority of them were

bad things about you. But after seeing you like this, you're definitely unique. You care about the imperial family more than anyone; you're intelligent, beautiful, soft-hearted, and strong. Your wisdom, words, and actions—they make me feel like I'm looking at a vassal of the Benigoa Goddess…" I complimented her.

"*Ah…"*

"I dare say that…" I paused.

"Yes?"

"I think you're more worthy of being the next ruler than her," I told her.

When I took a bite of the sliced meat, the taste of the barely-cooked meat filled my mouth. Charlia smiled brightly after hearing my comment. She then nodded in silence and ate. I wasn't sure whether it was because of the world's sweetest compliment or if the cold meat tasted better than she had expected, but Charlia's body started to quiver as if she was being pleasured.

'Like father, like daughter.'

CHAPTER 270
LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER (2)

I had no idea what Charlia meant by peasant blood and imperial blood, but there was one thing I had to acknowledge. The first princess had inherited the emperor's blood, and even though it was just a minor compliment, it still made her happy. Perhaps it had been a long time since she had gotten any compliments because every time I made a sweet comment, her body would tremble, and it was a sight I wasn't quite used to. Words were unnecessary to describe her expression.

'Will it really be fine to make her the empress?'

Out of the many compliments and praises I gave, the first princess reacted the most when I complimented her more than Charlotte. As expected, her favorite sentence included, *"more than the second princess,"* and it was almost like a magical spell.

"I think you're more beautiful than the second princess. You're smarter. You're the complete opposite of what people have been saying."

Of course, I didn't want to be charged with contempt against the imperial family, so like earlier, I didn't blatantly say Charlotte's name. However, the slow-witted Charlia would always catch on to the fact that I was praising her more than the second princess within my lengthy compliments.

'She catches on to these things pretty quickly.'

The corner of her lips looked as if they were going to tear as they higher and higher, making her look as if she was on drugs. For her, this type of compliment had to be sweeter than any compliments he had received so far.

'It's understandable.'

One day, some girl with peasant blood suddenly became the second princess and monopolized her father's love. On top of that, the second princess was highly intelligent and with exceptional talent in many different fields, so it was understandable for the first princess to think of it as absurd. Unlike Charlia whose

stats were almost all trash, Charlotte had an overwhelming ratio of epic or higher stats, so Charlia had obviously been blaming herself for her shortcomings since she was young.

[Acquired basic swordsmanship knowledge]

[Acquired basic magic knowledge]

[Acquired basic martial arts knowledge]

[Acquired basic body and mind training knowledge]

[Acquired basic military knowledge]

[Acquired basic culture knowledge]

[Acquired basic alchemy knowledge]

[Acquired basic elemental knowledge]

The most noticeable thing about her status window was the long list of knowledge acquisition messages, and aside from those, there were many acquired knowledge as well. It was easy to deduce why. I was sure that the first princess had done many things when she was young, and I could tell that she trained desperately. If swordsmanship didn't work, she would pick up magic, if magic didn't work, she would pick up military knowledge, and if that didn't work as well, she learned to become an Elementalist. Unfortunately, her efforts crumbled under the second princess's talent, and it was obvious how the second princess felt back then. A certain event caused the first princess's disgrace, and in the end, she started bullying her maids while living in her palace. Of course, the things I mentioned earlier were from Charlia's point of view, and I was sure that based on her habit and nature, the second princess's life had probably been a bumpy one as well.

'Charlia had probably been bullying her.'

It could be more than just simple bullying. Charlotte may have faced the threat of

assassination, and I was sure that getting her face slapped was part of her daily routine. When thinking about how evil this wicked villainess in front of me could become, the second princess probably grew up shedding tears of blood. Basically, this was a story about the female protagonist, Charlotte, and how she became strong despite the hardships and Charlia, the villainess out to destroy her. The story was heading toward good triumphing over evil ending, and the story was about to end as well.

'Until I stepped in… '

At some point, the tenacious Charlotte had grown up to the point of having the imperial family under her control. She had freed herself from the suppression, and that was how the story progressed.

Currently, the first princess had nothing. Charlotte had taken everything away from her, including the power that allowed her to exert her influence. I was sure the slow-witted first princess would have no idea of her situation until a sword was pointed at her neck.

'However… '

This didn't mean it was hopeless. The fact that the first princess had legitimacy was good news, and even though Charlia still hadn't started, I didn't think that it was already too late for her to start.

As we continued talking, Charlia kept on laughing out loud.

She lightly wiped the tears from her eyes as she spoke, "*Hahaha*. I can't remember the last time I laughed this much. I laughed so much I started crying."

"*Hahahaha*. Me, too. I enjoyed it more than I thought, Your Highness," I said.

"We talked so much that it's already dark… If it's alright with you, I'll give you a separate room, so why not rest here for tonight? I'd like to talk more with you, Brother Lee Ki-Young…" Charlia suggested.

"It's okay, Your Highness. If I could, I'd like to stay up all night talking to you, but I'm sure it'll cause you problems, Princess. That's how the public eye works, after all," I rejected.

"*Ahh*…"

"I'm certain they'll start gossiping about it. It doesn't matter if it ruins my image, but I don't want people gossiping about you for no reason," I continued.

"The public eye…" she mumbled.

"You need to pay attention to it. The public is a group of people who only believe what they see. Even if you and I discussed this empire's future, dirty-minded people will still think that we met today for a different reason. And I want to protect you, Princess," I warned her.

"*Ah*…"

"I'm certain it'll be the same in other parts as well," I added.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I'm sure there are a lot of stupid people who cannot understand your will to restore order. You must think carefully about the difference between the second princess and you. A two-faced person will win the hearts of the public, after all," I replied.

"…"

"Of course, I know about your honest, innocent side and that you don't know how to lie. However, just like how good ingredients tastes different depending on how they are cooked, so does the information the public will receive. I know of your generosity since we have spent some time together, but how could ignorant peasants understand how boundless the ocean is?" I explained

"*Ah*… thank you," she said.

"You must act so the stupid people can see the intelligence and class you possess, Princess. The law and order of the imperial family aren't important to them. What they see is the most important," I added.

I was sure she knew that she couldn't act like a fool anymore, but her fiery temper would probably remain incapable of stopping the anger and stubbornness rising up from within her.

“I think… you’re right, Brother Lee Ki-Young. Yes, you’re correct. Idiots only believe what they see; they don’t care about the things they can’t see,” Charlia commented.

“That’s correct. Sometimes, you must wear a mask the public wants. *Ahem*… I’ll be honest,” I started.

“Go ahead…”

“I’d like to be on the same side as you, Princess Charlia,” I told her.

“*Ah!*”

“I was actually going to wait a bit longer, but after talking to you today, I realized how pointless and useless my worries were. As a citizen, I know just how much you care about the people. Of course… I won’t deny the fact that I have also been blinded by your beauty, Princess Charlia. *Haha*,” I laughed.

“*Ahhh*…”

“What do you think, Princess?” I asked.

“Well…”

“About being on the same—”

“Yes! Of course! I accept! I accept, Brother Lee Ki-Young!” she shouted.

The way she jumped reminded me of a starving demon. When I slightly reached my hand out, Charlia jumped up and grabbed my hand. She must have been surprised by my actions because she let go, but she was happy. Charlia looked as if she found a lamp in a dark place.

‘It’s too easy… ’

I knew coaxing her would be easy, but it went a lot easier than I had imagined. Not a single person trusted her, and I understood that I was her only ally, but I was so surprised when I saw her put her *complete* trust in me that I had to clear my throat.

“I’m not sure how I should respond after seeing you accepting me like this. *Hahaha*.”

“I-I acted so disgracefully…” she muttered.

“It’s okay, Princess Charlia. It actually makes me even happier that I got to see that side of you. *Ahem*… Well then, I think it’s best if we call it a night before it gets darker…” I suggested.

“*Ah*, sure. Let’s do that,” she said.

Charlia seemed a bit sad, but it couldn't be helped. If I continued to stay in this room, an unknown gossip may start floating around, so it was best to end it here for today. If we would work together from now on, I would have to correct her behavior, but I felt that I had made quite the progress today. When it came to giving her advice on her schedule and behavior, those were areas I could get involved with after we got even closer.

When I slowly got up and opened the door, I saw the maids outside smiling brightly. I was sure that they saw Charlia’s expression behind me. The first princess sent me off with a satisfied smile and the maids guiding me had the same expression.

“No need to help me with the bath today. I’ll wash up on my own, so don’t let anyone in my room for the time being,” Charlia ordered.

“Yes, Your Highness.”

“And make sure to ask Mr. Lee Ki-Young when he’ll be visiting again,” she added.

“Understood.”

The way Charlia spoke to those beneath her sounded warm.

‘She had realized something.’

My footsteps were light as I retired for the night. Charlia had to be generous enough to forgive small mistakes when she was in a good mood, and although I didn’t want to acknowledge it, she and I were similar in that sense.

I was going to scold Jung Ha-Yan about the issue that occurred during the dinner with the attendants, but it was difficult to get into the mood to do so.

Unlike the maids who were guiding me, the maids who had received orders from the

princess quickly approached me. When I turned around, I saw them quickly bowing toward me. When I looked at them quietly as if telling them to speak, a maid nodded and talked.

“M-Mr. Lee Ki-Young.”

“What is it?” I asked.

“Well… may I ask when you’ll visit again?” the maid asked.

“I’m not sure… I’ll have to think…”

The maids’ expressions immediately turned gloomy.

“Actually… could you ask the princess if she’s available tomorrow for lunch?” I asked.

“Yes. I-I’ll ask!” the maid exclaimed.

The faces of the other maids also brightened up.

‘I know why they’re acting like that.’

They had to be thinking that I could tame the crazy woman. I had no idea just how crazy she usually was that they would show this kind of reaction, but one thing I was sure of was that Charlia had become different from her usual self. Naturally, the maids weren’t the only ones who felt the first princess’s change.

“The first princess has changed.”

It had been exactly three days since that day, and it was one of the heartwarming news spreading within the imperial castle.

CHAPTER 271
LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER (3)

The first princess had changed. To be exact, rumors about her '*getting her act together'* were spreading within the imperial castle. Even I thought that she had become different from before, so I was sure that those who were even more familiar with her reacted more dramatically to the change. The ones who had noticed the change first were the maids serving the first princess, and I was sure that they would be even more surprised as time went on. Nowadays, Charlia was overlooking the things she was sensitive to before, and she even turned a blind eye to small mistakes. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that the happiness level of her maids who had been dealing with her craziness had immensely increased. Funnily enough, the maids were waiting for me to ask for the first princess and they had to be thinking that I changed her because I noticed their strange actions before me. Regardless of the first princess's order, they moved in an organized manner to bring the first princess and me even closer. For me, their actions were cute, so I didn't really mind it. Actually, I pitied the maids because they had to do this.

'Yeah, I'm sure you guys suffered the most… '

I didn't want to ruin their happiness. It didn't have anything to do with me, but their organized movement was basically their fight for survival. Since even I felt a strange, cheap sympathy whenever I was with Charlia, I would sometimes give the maids a thumbs up based on their deeds, and it actually was more effective than I thought.

When I encountered the maids the next day, the maids looked at me as if they were going to pledge their allegiance to me. I just made those comments because I pitied them, but they were effective. After some time, it came to the point where the maids started reporting to me about how Charlia was doing when I wasn't there to visit her. Of course, they weren't *ordinary* reports. Whenever I asked about Charlia's condition as I entered and exited the living room of Charlia's palace, their answers were sincere.

'Yesterday after you retired, she seemed very happy.'

Or…

'She spent some time reading, and she found it hard to sleep.'

I was receiving this kind of report, but the fact that Charlia's maids were liking me was definitely good news. No matter the ingredient, they would end up being useful and even if the maids had no power, I was sure they would still be useful. As I mentioned earlier, the biggest beneficiaries of this situation were the first princess's group of maids. Obviously, it wasn't only the people she had been bullying who were happy about Charlia's changes. The emperor was especially happy about it as well.

Honestly, it wasn't a big change, and I didn't use magic to completely change Charlia's mindset. It was easy for human beings to break bad, but it was hard for them to become good. Even if their attitude could be fixed, it wasn't something that could be done in just a short period of time like this.

'Of course… '

Changing Charlia and making her the next empress was almost impossible, so all I did was suggest the kind of image she should portray to the public. I coaxed her gently and told her how she should act. I even created a list of things she had to do and even managed her schedule for her.

Charlia was just as spiteful and tenacious as Charlotte, and the sense of defeat she had been feeling since she was young was eating away at her self-esteem. Even though she was incompetent and filled with inadequacy, she still grew up as a person who wanted to be acknowledged more than anyone. I couldn't imagine the amount of stress she was under when everyone ignored her and focused on her younger sister. I was sure she had been waiting for someone like me for a long time; someone who would acknowledge, support, and tell even trash like her that she was amazing; someone who could promote her and make her most trivial actions look grand; and someone who could sell bags of chips half-filled with air.

"She gave her maids a vacation."

"Seeing that she has been going to the shrine every day, the first princess must have pulled herself together."

"I heard that she also attended the cabinet meeting in the morning. She sat at the end and listened quietly…"

“I heard the first princess has gotten curious about the lives of her people. I heard that she wants to check on them herself, so she included that in her schedule.”

“I heard that she hasn’t been drinking lately.”

“At the last dinner party, I saw her rejecting wine with my own eyes.”

Exaggerating the first princess’s trivial actions was really easy, and when I spoke quietly, everyone’s eyes landed on me.

“Like father, like daughter, *hahaha*.”

The satisfactory comment was enough to instantly grab the attention of the old nobles. The slogans in election campaigns would usually speak for the candidate.

‘Candidate number one, Charlia. Like father, like daughter.’

Of course, the empire didn’t have slogans like this, but to make Charlia’s trivial actions look amazing, this kind of work was required. There was a reason why the politicians back on Earth made bullshit comments about doing something for the people or improving the economy. The candidates doing it for the people were focused on the people and those who wanted to improve the economy focused on the economy. Their policy, publicity, and campaign looked the same, but there was a difference, and in my case, the difference was even more ridiculous. The image I wanted to create for Charlia was neither for the people nor was it to improve the empire’s economy. In addition, it wasn’t even a slogan representing the candidate. The phrase was baseless and illogical, but it was like magic to some idiots.

‘Legitimacy.’

“Of course! Everyone knows that Princess Charlia has inherited the emperor’s blood.”

“You’re right. *Hahaha*. Everyone must have felt lost at some point in their lives. It has to be running in the family.”

“Now that I think about it, I think when the seventh emperor was young, he didn’t have the easiest life. He focused on studying when he was in his 40s and ascended

the throne in his 50s. But when you look at his achievements, we can say that this might be the start for Princess Charlia."

"*Hahaha*. You're right. Indeed!"

The way they were talking to each other was amusing. I considered my job done after saying that one comment, so I headed to the corner of the room while holding a glass of wine. Naturally, Jung Ha-Yan followed me, as it had been a while since we spent some time together. Lee Ji-Hye, who had been doing the same work as me, slowly approached me after she was done with her work.

"Aren't you tired?" I asked.

"*Ah*, I'm fine since we're together, oppa. *Hehe*," Jung Ha-Yan replied.

It felt like it had been a while since we talked. Of course, we met every day, so we basically talked to each other every day. Still, I felt bad that I couldn't take care of her when she needed me. I wanted to do something for her, but Jung Ha-Yan seemed happy just being with me, and when I patted her head, she happily came even closer to me.

"Cheers," I said.

"Cheers!" she repeated.

"By the way, how's the research going?" I asked.

"*Ah*, I think it's going well. I was kind of busy because I had to move my schedule up a bit, b-but it went s-smoother than I thought. Max said he's going to try to make a prototype in a few days," she answered.

"He didn't tell you an exact date?" I questioned.

"No, he didn't," she answered.

"*Hm*…"

"Should I grill him a bit?" she asked.

"No, there's no need. And the second princess…"

“I-I’ve been watching her,” she said.

“Okay. If you notice anything unusual, report it to me right away,” I ordered her.

“Okay!”

When I lightly held her hand, Jung Ha-Yan dropped her head. We were in the middle of a party, and when I took the lead, she happily followed me. Even though I had never been able to learn how to dance properly during social events, I thought I could somewhat dance, and Jung Ha-Yan started spinning with a bright smile. I had no idea what she was thinking, but based on her smile, she probably felt like a princess from a fairy tale, and naturally, it wasn’t a bad feeling for me as well. If I were asked how I was feeling, I would say that I felt pretty good.

Even though Jung Ha-Yan would reveal her scary side from time to time, she had always placed me above everything else. Since we had known each other for a long time, I was getting used to that side of her, and strangely enough, I even found it cute.

‘It does make me kind of nervous how she has been too quiet lately… ’

I thought she was going to take some kind of action since her magic stats had increased, but other than using Anemone’s Eyes once in a while, she hadn’t done anything else. Even though we had spent more time apart than together, she was very calm.

‘Does she think it’s not enough?’

Aside from the time she had been spending on the quest I gave her, she was using all her time assimilating the knowledge she had obtained from that legendary-ranked staff. As such, she could be thinking that she still hadn’t properly absorbed the knowledge she had acquired.

‘I’m sure she wants to get stronger.’

I was obviously worried about how she would act after getting what she wanted. Based on Lee Ji-Hye’s story, I had no idea when or where she would act in an unpredictable way, but she would definitely not do anything strange when I could see her.

Anyway, my plans, which involved having Jung Ha-Yan observe Charlotte and asking

Max to research the video hologram technology, were going along smoothly. It was important to complete the hologram technology in time, but I had no use for it right now.

The sisters' fight over the throne still hadn't surfaced, and even if the video hologram became available right now, there would be no use for it. Right now, we had to adjust the scale that was heavily tilted to one side. It was time to strengthen the first princess's favorable image and start performing tasks that would negatively affect the second princess.

'Those with power usually attract at least one bad rumor in their life.'

I thought about spreading fabricated rumors, but I thought it would be best to be reasonable about it since our regressor seemed worried about the second princess. To Charlotte, this act could make her blood boil, but among the ideas I came up with, this was the best one. The slogan that would give her a negative image was really simple.

"The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

It could be applied to both princesses, but I was certain the meaning behind it would be different for Charlotte. A commoner parent was a big weakness in this kind of society.

'Like mother, like daughter.'

CHAPTER 272
LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER (4)

The negative rumors about Charlotte were spreading discreetly, very slowly, and maliciously. Since I didn't want the rumors to start spreading within the castle, I designed it so that it would start from the outskirts to the center and from the small areas to the big areas. The task wasn't difficult because the Black Swan Guild and Kasugano Yuno of the Yozora Guild were helping me. The Black Swan Guild was known as a guild with a wide information network, so this was their specialty and Yozora became pretty skilled in this field as well after taking over Ito Sota's guild.

Of course, I didn't openly control the media because it wasn't the time to do that yet. The Blue and Red Mercenary Guild weren't sitting still either. Since my movement was limited, Kim Hyun-Sung and Cha Hee-Ra were trying to convince Cheon Kwan-Wi and Yu Ran for me. Honestly, it didn't matter if they sided with the second princess, but I thought that in the end, they would be with us since we were all players. If they were natives, they probably would have made a different choice, but they knew they couldn't turn their backs on Lindel and Celia.

Naturally, spreading rumors wasn't the only easy task we had to do. Creating fake information was also very easy. When creating this type of information, the most important was using the truth as the foundation. Rather than creating a false rumor without any foundation, adding information that people would question was more effective. People may think that Charlotte had no weakness for us to exploit, but that wasn't the case. The fact that she really cared for her people could be effectively utilized.

"What's the second princess's schedule today, Ji-Hye noona?" I asked.

"Well, it's the same as usual. A meeting with the representatives of the citizens…" Lee Ji-Hye replied.

"*Ah*, it's nothing special. We can proceed like we usually do," I told her.

"You're talking about engaging in debauchery with those peasants, right?" she asked.

The second princess's civic and serious meeting about the future of the empire with the citizens' representative was distorted into a time of debauchery with the peasants.

"*Ah*, she said she's going to have a light meal with her maids," she added.

"*Hm*, let's spread that as well. The fact that she has a commoner's blood," I suggested.

"I was going to include it anyway. Since we're doing this, we might as well go all out. One has a commoner's blood while the other has royal blood. And the peasant has a better attitude as well. This is really fun," she commented.

Lee Ji-Hye was basically saying that the peasant's blood was definitely flowing within the second princess because she was eating with the maids to lower herself.

'She's really interesting, too.'

I wasn't sure whether it was because of her mother's influence or not, but the love she had for her people would haunt her. If she hadn't caught my attention in the first place, then I wouldn't have cared about her, but the important thing was that she had already grabbed my attention. The more I knew about her, the more I realized that she was an ideal empress, and I was sure Lee Ji-Hye would agree with me.

"Well, it doesn't really matter to me, but the more I see her, the more I question if this is really the right thing to do," she said.

"…"

"I guarantee that if Charlotte becomes the empress, history will recognize her as a wise empress for a long time. As long as people like you don't cause a scene," she added.

"I have the same thought, noona," I commented.

"Honestly, what happens to the empire is none of our business, but since we're on the same boat, it's better if our boat is big and safe, right? I had no idea until I heard the stories, but based on the information Miss Ha-Yan had acquired, she's definitely a queen bee. The second princess is a charismatic and determined person with great leadership skills," Lee Ji-Hye continued.

"…"

"She's weak against the weak and strong against the strong. The way she uses her political skills to her advantage is incredible… Don't you think she's pretty brave that she even thought about taming you, Oppa? As the princess with a commoner mother, I'm sure it hadn't been easy for her to arrive where she is today with her own power, and she really loves her people as well. We can easily understand why the first princess is jealous of her, and why she has been making a fuss if we look at the second princess's appearance, talent, intellect, and character," she explained.

"I agree. It's funny that I'm arguing over the empire's politics. And I'm sure the second princess is thinking about a lot of things as well, but what can she do?" I said.

'Kim Hyun-Sung said the second princess can't be the empress.'

There was no perfect human in the world, so I was sure the second princess had some kind of hidden issue.

"Does that really bother you? You're more narrow-minded than I thought. I actually like the idea of her becoming the empress…" Lee Ji-Hye commented.

"I told you that wasn't the only reason. Honestly, I think the second princess is better than the first princess, but that's it. Charlotte cares for her people, but not us. Charlia is better since we can change her into the person we want her to be. It will be more laborious, but we can't miss out on the opportunity of becoming the empire's shadow ruler,[1]" I explained.

"You're right, Oppa. I was just telling you my thoughts. Anyway, I'll continue with my work since we have already decided on the title. I need to see where and which side I should spread the rumor first," she said.

"Were there any movements?" I asked.

"Wouldn't it be strange if there wasn't? It'll take some time for the rumors to reach the imperial castle, but the second princess is really sensitive to rumors going around. I'm sure she's trying to find out where the malicious rumors came from. If we get caught, that'll be the end for both of us," she warned.

"We have to make sure we don't do it for a long time, and we can just say that we didn't do it," I told her.

“You’ve been pretty close to the first princess recently, so I don’t know if that excuse will even work… Even though there haven’t been any official actions, anyone could tell that you’re on the same side as the first princess, and I’m sure Charlotte already knows about it.” Lee Ji-Hye pointed out.

“I knew it…” I commented.

We had reached the point where some of the nobles had started avoiding me. When it was decided that Lee Ki-Young would be the political enemy of Charlotte’s faction, Charlotte began pressuring them not to meet with me. Lady Caitlyn, Lady Elise, and Lady Marilyn were still supporting me, and the majority of the nobles who refused to meet me were those I wasn’t close with or were useless.

However, Charlotte’s reaction surprised me. She made the first move before my relationship with Charlia even surfaced, and that wasn’t all. It was odd how strange allegations started spreading within the imperial castle, and the target was obvious.

‘Is it right for the Eight Seats to get involved in the empire’s politics?’

If you thought about it, you could see how ridiculous this allegation was. The appointment of foreigners as the Eight Seats of the Empire was decided by the emperor alone and opposing that decision was basically going against the emperor. Obviously, the Charlotte I knew wasn’t dumb enough to oppose the emperor’s decision head-on. Still, the fact that she was discreetly spreading these allegations was her way of expressing that she wanted to reduce the Eight Seats’ authority and mobility. It was like when bargaining for an item priced at a hundred gold, the buyer was trying to buy it at the original price by calling out a ridiculously low price. They would keep lowering the price by pointing out the flaws and saying that there were scratches, and I was sure they were going to buy the item after offering the lowest price possible.

‘I understand what she’s thinking.’

The Eight Seats may not have been part of Charlotte’s plan. Basically, we were the uninvited guests. In Hyun-Sung’s past life, the foreigners may have actively supported her succession as the empress, but since the situation was the opposite right now, I was sure she found the Eight Seats a nuisance.

Basically, after that day, we had been exchanging light punches without actually

seeing each other, and the quick-witted nobles had probably caught on to the fact that the atmosphere within the imperial family was strange.

“The problem is that it’s happening a bit faster than I previously thought…” I said.

“It just happened a bit faster than you expected. It’s natural for it to happen this way and it’s either because the people in the second princess’s faction are competent or the second princess herself is competent. Personally, I think it’s the latter, but what does it matter? Since our plan is going along smoothly, it’s probably best if we wait until the rumors reach the imperial castle. By the way, isn’t it time for you to visit the first princess?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“Yeah, I have to visit her,” I replied.

“I placed the schedule on the desk, so look over it and proceed,” she informed me.

“Thanks…”

“It’s nothing. I’m actually doing it for myself. It’s a chance for my future husband to become the empire’s shadow ruler so how could I miss out on this opportunity? I don’t like gambling, but I know that supporting you like this is my duty as your wife,” she explained.

“I appreciate it.”

“Good luck. *Ah*, I won’t put a limit on a few things. I think it’s necessary to have a few really *provocative* things,” she pointed out.

“We don’t need to go too far on anything since we’re not doing this to prevent the second princess from making a comeback,” I told her.

“I got it. I won’t overdo it. It’ll be moderate.”

I wasn’t sure what Lee Ji-Hye’s standard was when it came to ‘moderate,’ but I thought it would be best to check on it at least once.

When I exited the room after waving to her, I saw a maid hanging out in front of my room. It was one of the first princess’s maids. I didn’t know her name, but I had seen her a few times, so I remembered her. I was certain she was the one who had been on the ground asking for forgiveness during that particular social event. And it was

obvious why she was here.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” she called out.

“*Ah*.”

After checking her name with Mind’s Eye, I started talking.

“Lady Aris.”

“Please speak comfortably. I-I’m afraid someone might hear us,” she confessed.

“*Haha*. It has become a habit for me to speak like this. Anyway, what brings you here—Wait, wait. I shouldn’t have asked. I was actually going to visit Her Highness soon. So… the schedule…” I paused.

“Uplifting the imperial knights and praising them for their hard work,” the maid replied.

It was such a trivial thing that I actually forgot about it. Visiting the knights to uplift and praise them would improve her reputation. It seemed that the maid really trusted me, as she came to me for something like this.

‘It’s understandable… ’

The opinions about the first princess had drastically changed even though it hadn’t even been a week since she started enjoying the publicity effect caused by following the schedule her faction had suggested to her. I was sure even a blind man would see the amazing strength of her faction.

‘But the fact that she’s too reliant on her faction is a problem… ’

“But it’s not exactly a bad thing either…” I unknowingly muttered.

“Excuse me?” the maid asked.

“It’s nothing. Her Highness hasn’t left yet?” I asked.

“Yes. She’s thinking about which dress to wear…” she answered.

"*Ah*. Now that I think about it, I don't think I have mentioned this," I pointed out.

"Sorry?"

"It'll be better if she wore light armor that feels just a bit luxurious rather than a dress. There's no reason for her to wear a dress when visiting knights. I'm sure that doing that will be more effective. I know you understand what I'm talking about," I suggested.

"*Ah!* I do!" the maid exclaimed.

Even if it was just an outfit, this kind of detail was important.

"Tie her hair up, and there should just be a minimum amount of accessories. The seal of the imperial knights should be perfect," I added.

"Understood."

"Go ahead and help the princess get dressed. I'll be there shortly," I ordered.

"Yes, sir!"

As I saw the maid running off, I entered my room and reviewed the schedule. After visiting the imperial knights, she was scheduled to visit the court mages.

'It's the day she'll cosplay as the first princess.'

I was taking care of her schedule and outfit. I was even writing out her speech—all these made me feel like I was a celebrity's manager.

After doing a final review and exiting the room, I headed toward the living room where we always met, and I saw Charlia who was done getting ready. She was dressed exactly the way I told her maid. It wasn't enough to call her a knight, but she was wearing light armor without unnecessary accessories.

"Brother Lee Ki-Young!" Charlia called out.

"Princess Charlia. I'm sorry for making you wait," I apologized.

"It's fine. I actually just got here as well…" she said.

"*Hahaha*. You look so beautiful in this armor that it's making your outfit stand out," I complimented her.

"That's…"

The maids actually looked more amazing than the smiling first princess. Maybe it was because they had been working hard in hell, but they all had a variety of skills. Even though time was short, they understood my request and didn't put heavy makeup on her, which was a surprise. Even the hairstyle I requested was done with excellent quality.

'They're really skilled.'

The maids standing behind Charlia looked as if they had succeeded in life when I complimented the first princess. I wanted to check the maids using Mind's Eye, but since we didn't have enough time, I had no choice but to focus on Charlia.

After complimenting her appearance, I reviewed the details and precautions with her again. After explaining how she should move, I handed her a note with a speech written on it, and I saw her reviewing it carefully.

'This is good.'

Charlia may not be competent, but she had the will to get things done. She must have also gained some self-esteem because she seemed confident as she walked. However, it didn't take long for a frown to appear on her face. There was a person standing in front of the imperial knights' tourney hall.

'Would you look at that… '

I couldn't help but click my tongue when I saw Charlotte visiting the imperial knights one step ahead of us.

'So, she was aiming for this… '

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1. I think it's pretty self-explanatory, but if it's still confusing, you can google shadow government. ☜

CHAPTER 273
CARROT, STICK, AND THE SWORD (1)

'Tsk, tsk... '

It was obviously intentional because when I checked Charlotte's schedule with Lee Ji-Hye's help, there wasn't anything about visiting the imperial knights. This was no different from a regional candidate of another jurisdiction doing a campaign at the same location as a candidate with the home advantage, so of course, I found it ridiculous. When I saw the influential nobles with her, I thought it would be best to continue this visit with some supporters of our own.

After greeting us happily as if she had been waiting for us, Charlotte slowly walked toward us. Charlia was smart enough to figure out why she was here, as she raised her trembling hand and glared at Charlotte.

"Please act like you normally do, Your Highness," I told her.

When I whispered to her, afraid that she might do something unexpected, I saw Charlia nodding quietly; however, she still looked as if she wanted to rip the woman in front of her to pieces.

'I'm not sure if she'll be able to keep it in.'

She was jealous, and she even cried tears of blood just thinking about her step-sister, so of course, I was nervous about what she would do. I was sure Charlotte also thought badly about her older sister, but at least she wouldn't express it at a place like this.

It was ridiculous how Charlotte nodded while smiling and after seeing her younger sister, Charlia started talking.

"W-What brings you here?"

"I heard that you'll visit the imperial knights and praise them for their hard work. Since it's a rare occasion, I decided to visit in case you needed my help. I apologize

for not contacting you in advance," Charlotte replied.

"…"

'Help, my ass.'

"I see… thanks," Charlia responded.

Charlia answered by quietly nodding at her sister's absurd answer. She was still annoyed, but I wanted to compliment her for not making it so obvious.

'It's not a bad scene.'

'The first and second princess visited the imperial knights together' was good news. For the people who had already known that the sisters had a bad relationship with each other, the news was more than enough to make their heads tilt. If things went smoothly, then both of them would greatly profit, so it would be a win for both sides. The emperor would naturally nod in approval, and the oblivious citizens would cheer for their friendship. The only problem was that I had no idea when Charlia would go insane, but right now, her behavior was pretty normal.

Anyway, the sisters didn't say anything else as they entered the knights' practice room. The second princess glanced at me instead of the first princess, and as expected, she still didn't like me.

'It's understandable.'

I was sure she thought of me as a brown-noser. Whenever Charlia did something, I would whisper to her every time, so it would be strange if she still hadn't realized the fact that I was controlling the first princess from behind. Charlotte wasn't wrong to think that way since I had been managing Charlia's actions and schedule, but…

'I hope she doesn't think too badly of me.'

It was the wish of the petite bourgeoisie not to leave a bad impression on those with power even if they were considered political enemies.

When we entered the practice room, the vice-captain of the imperial knights and the officer-in-charge of this event greeted them, but they must not have expected them to visit at the same time because they looked pretty surprised.

“W-We’re very happy that you decided to visit us, Your Highnesses.”

“We were worried that we would bother the knights,” Charlotte confessed.

“Not at all. I’m sure the knights will be very happy just by the fact that you visited, Princess Charlotte.”

“I’m relieved to hear that,” she said.

Charlia looked like she wanted to say something, but Charlotte had beat her to it.

‘I knew this was going to happen… ’

Charlotte was used to this kind of occasion, so she was skillfully leading the conversation, but Charlia had to be feeling kind of awkward. I was sure she felt useless right now.

“*Ah*…”

The hesitation she was showing was absurd. It seemed like she really wanted to take the initiative, but the vice-captain and Charlotte were already having a conversation she couldn’t join in. And it became apparent that our second princess had extensive knowledge in this field as well.

“Have you figured out the reorganization of the troops?” Charlotte asked.

“Yes, of course. It’s true that the imperial knights are more cavalry-oriented, but I thought it would be better to increase the ratio of normal infantry and heavy infantry,” the vice-captain replied.

“It’s definitely difficult to manage the troops with just the cavalry…” she commented.

“You’re right, Princess. There’s a limit. And we have high expectations of your support when it comes to the supply of the knights’ personal potions,” the vice-captain said.

“I think it would be best to discuss that with Brother Lee Ki-Young over here,” the second princess suggested.

“Now that I think about it…”

“Yes, the potions supplied to the knights this time will be brought directly from the Blue Guild’s alchemy workshop. There’s no reason for us not to use them when the continent’s best alchemist is in the empire.” Charlotte pointed out.

“*Haha*, I see. I actually used a high-quality potion distributed by the Blue Guild. It’s true that it’s difficult to purchase it with the salary of an ordinary knight, but it’s so effective I can’t believe it’s a potion,” they confessed.

‘Wow… ’

My eyes widened at the sudden reward. It was true that I was annoyed by Charlotte’s punishment, but the reward was really sweet.

‘Is this her way of apologizing?’

Since the supply potions were being distributed throughout the empire all this time, the quality of the potions wouldn’t be good. Considering the knights’ survival rate and safety, using mass-produced potions from the Blue Guild’s alchemy workshop was the right thing to do. In fact, I was actually thinking about signing a contract with the empire, but I had never imagined that Charlotte would push for it first.

‘She doesn’t seem like someone who would do something like that… I’m sure there’s a reason behind it.’

When thinking about stability, it was only right to distribute the potions I made. Giving high-quality items to soldiers was considered common sense both on Earth and on this continent. I was certain there was a place out there where this common sense wouldn’t work, but this empire wasn’t dumb enough to treat the knights and soldiers poorly when those people were risking their lives for them. Before arguing about whether our relationship was good or not, choosing to use my potion was a fact that couldn’t be stopped. Basically, Charlotte had thrown this unexpected opportunity to see my reaction. It would be good if I accepted it. However, she would still profit, even if I didn’t accept it.

‘Driving a wedge?’

It was right to make that kind of assumption. I couldn’t help but flinch when I saw Charlia openly showing an uncomfortable expression. I wanted to act like I was fine, but since I was a political figure, I had to say something, so I thought it wouldn’t be bad to join in their conversation. Obviously, I had to bring Charlia with me as well

since she was being completely neglected.

“It’s true that the potion is expensive, but you won’t have to worry about the quality since I will personally take care of the potions that will be delivered to the knights working hard for the empire. To be honest, the Blue Guild isn’t in a good spot financially due to various reasons…” I explained.

Actually, we were doing really well.

“Still, the potions will be a lot cheaper than the market price,” I added.

This was my chance, so of course, I would try to gain as much profit as I could. I wouldn’t give any major discounts as well.

“Actually, Princess Charlia made a similar suggestion to yours, Princess Charlotte… *Hahaha*. What a coincidence,” I mentioned.

Obviously, she had never said anything like that, and even though I lied about many things in less than a minute, they were white lies, so I didn’t feel bad about them.

When I quietly pushed Charlia to the front, I nodded and saw her walking up.

‘Just play along.’

“I see. So, Princess Charlia also…”

The vice-captain of the imperial knights revealed a satisfied look as he nodded while smiling. Charlia wasn’t dumb enough that she couldn’t join in the conversation, because I noticed her trying to talk.

“It’s embarrassing,” Charlia said.

“*Hahaha*. I see. *Hahaha*. I had no idea that both of you have been thinking so much for the knights,” the vice-captain said.

“The country has to be safe for it to develop. The imperial knights are known as the best armed group throughout the empire, so if it’s for the knights, I’m sure everyone here is thinking about the same thing,” Charlia explained.

“Thank you for your kind words, Princess Charlia. *Hahaha*,” he laughed.

'Nice. You're doing great.'

It seemed that reading the note I gave her earlier was effective; however, Charlotte remained calm. When I thought about how this was within her expectations, it was safe to assume that she had made those comments just to see our reaction. My assumption was proven right because while Charlia was talking, Charlotte took a step back and got closer to me. She was determined to drive a wedge between me and Charlia, as she was unable to recruit me.

While exchanging different conversations, Charlotte and Charlia offered words of encouragement to the knights as a way to train themselves when it came to building their image. It seemed like the majority of the knights favored Charlotte more, but it felt like they were trying to show who had more power. This was also my first time entering the knights' practice room, so even though I was focused on Charlia, I also used Mind's Eye to check the stats of the imperial knights.

'Their levels are pretty high.'

Since the gramps Victor Hart had been training them with everything he had, I was sure they were the strongest group in the empire. Seeing that the majority of them had high endurance and stamina, I was certain that their destructive power on horseback was unimaginable. An ordinary mid-sized guild would certainly get blown away with just one attack from them.

Of course, the first princess seemed like she wasn't thinking about that and was focused on following the actions and movements I had explained to her.

'She's doing well, though… '

She offered words of encouragement and complimented their military service. Visits like these were meaningless and usually done for show. The second princess also portrayed a better image since she was skilled with the sword, but it didn't really matter if Charlia didn't go that far.

'She just has to do whatever she can do.'

There was no need to show off.

"Thank you for your hard work," Charlia said.

“We’ll do our best as the swords that protect the empire,” the vice-captain told her.

‘Nice… ’

“It’s thanks to all of you that the empire is safe,” she added.

“Thank you! It’s an honor, Princess Charlia.”

‘Yeah, that’s all you need to do. You just need to do what you can do.’

Honestly, the first princess shaking hands with these strong knights was more than enough to give them strength. Even if the knights controlled their strength, shaking hands with them would still be painful for people with low endurance. Even though Charlia’s hand had already become swollen from all the handshakes, she was still smiling, which made me think that she was indeed spiteful.

What she was doing was more than enough, and while I was nodding with satisfaction, Charlotte started talking to me.

“You think she’ll change?”

Her voice sounded calm.

CHAPTER 274
CARROT, STICK, AND THE SWORD (2)

Charlotte always had that same poker face, and when I looked at her again, I noticed many similarities between her and Charlia. They both had platinum blonde hair and pale skin. From afar, I was sure it would be difficult to tell them apart. Of course, if you looked closely, you would see the difference. After all, the first princess had a vicious face, so it was easy to tell that she was the emperor's biological daughter.

'It would've been more comfortable if their hair color was different… '

It would have been easier to muddy the water by saying that she had the blood of a commoner if their hair color was different from each other. I wasn't sure if Charlotte noticed my thoughts, but she pushed her hair back and continued talking.

"People don't change easily."

"I agree with you, but I'm curious why you're telling me this…" I said.

"You don't have to pretend like you don't know, Brother Lee Ki-Young. I have an idea about the kind of person you are, and you also have an idea about the kind of person I am," she replied.

"I really don't understand what you're talking about, Your Highness. Especially at an event like this…" I replied.

"I'm talking about your cooperation with my older sister," she said bluntly.

I thought it would be best to remain quiet, so when I kept my mouth shut, she continued talking.

"I thought you were the talkative type, but you're quieter than I thought."

"You seem to have mistaken me for someone else," I responded.

"Yes, you're right. I may have thought of you wrongly. I thought you were a little more

rational than this, but the way you've been acting is beyond common sense," she remarked.

'You're right… '

Anyone could tell that working with Charlia right now wasn't a rational act. Normally, I would have chosen to humbly accept Charlotte's stick and eat the carrot. However, my fear was the sinner worried about Kim Hyun-Sung's request and how painful Charlotte's stick would be.

"I've heard a lot of things about you," Charlotte continued.

"…"

"Especially from Mr. Victor Hart. I already knew that you weren't really the type to compromise, but you have been acting more extreme than I thought. I admit that I was somewhat wrong about you and I apologize for being rude to you before," she added.

"It wasn't rude. I'm worried that someone might hear you, Your Highness." I pointed out.

"I'm talking about trying to make you feel powerless, Brother Lee Ki-Young. I'm sure you understand, but I wasn't exactly happy about your existence. If you were in my position, I'm sure you would've thought about how you would suppress yourself. If one person has too much power, then they'll become a threat to someone like me," she explained.

"I don't think I have power, Princess Charlotte. How could I discuss power in front of someone who's part of the imperial family?" I asked.

"You don't have to feel uncomfortable about a conversation like this, but I'm sure you won't accept it despite me saying it. How about we change the subject then?" she suggested.

Charlotte stopped talking and looked at the front because after the first princess was done with her tour along with the imperial knights, she walked up to the platform. After Charlotte took a seat, I noticed her staring at me, which meant that she wanted me to sit next to her. She had to have planned this out from the start because I didn't see an empty seat. In case Charlia might misunderstand, I asked for her

understanding first before taking a seat. Charlia then took out the folded note from her pocket and then placed it on the podium. Since I wrote the speech, I was sure she would say, at least half of it. Charlia started reading my speech confidently and clearly. The ones watching her in their seats started clapping, and I heard her speak even more confidently and personally, I was looking forward to it. I wanted to continue watching her, but because of Charlotte, I couldn't focus on her.

"I'll be more straightforward, Brother Lee Ki-Young."

"Excuse me?" I asked.

"I want you to join my faction," she said.

"What do you…"

"It's just like I said. I want you to leave my older sister and join my party," she repeated.

"…"

"I have a lot of doubts and worries. I thought maybe we have some similarities. Even if you decide to join me, I will still continue with my plans. I will reduce your authority, and I'll work hard to make sure you compromise," she continued.

"*Ah*…"

"However, I can promise that the result will be beneficial for you, even if you don't like it right now… I guarantee that the result will be good for both the empire and you. Of course, I can't guarantee that it'll be better than what you're planning, but it won't be as dangerous as the thing you're investing in," she added.

I had a feeling she was going to say something like that. I must have seemed appealing enough for her to pass up. Charlotte had to have gotten impressed by the fact that I was trying to stage Charlia's comeback.

'Am I someone she wants?'

Charlotte also knew that I was too powerful for her to immediately control and that was why her decision to reduce my authority remained unchanging. It wasn't that I didn't want to change at all. If it weren't for Kim Hyun-Sung's request, changing

factions would have been worth thinking about.

'However… '

Like I told Victor Hart during the Ito Sota incident, the other party should compromise, rather than me.

"It may have been rude, but I did a background check on you. I was more interested in things that were a bit different than the titles everyone knows, such as the Dragon's Chosen One or the Holy Empire's Honorary Bishop. The fact that you established the press in Lindel and brought various changes was the most impressive of them all," Charlotte confessed.

"It's an honor," I responded.

"The free cities are independent of the empire, but they are bound to receive indirect influence. I knew this was the case because not long after you established the press in Lindel, something similar to the press was established in the empire as well. I also know very well that you at least have a conscience despite being a selfish human being. Whatever the reason, the things you have done had brought great results to the majority of the people," she explained.

"I see…"

"I believe the reason why you're able to bring those results is that you care about how others see you. Actually, I'm certain of it. You care about how you're portrayed to the public. You may not compromise with those with power, but you're willing to compromise with the public," she continued.

"I'm thankful that you think of me that way. However, I'll have to think about whether it's a compliment or not," I told her.

"It's a compliment, so there's no need to think about it. The empire needs talented people like you, Brother Lee Ki-Young. We need someone in politics who cares about the opinion of the public," Charlotte informed.

I had to stop breathing for a moment.

'She's really something else… '

I knew she was smart, but she was smarter than I thought. Her mindset was different from the majority of the nobles here, and she couldn't be compared to that parrot standing in front of the podium and reading the speech I had written for her. I thought I finally understood why people gathered around her. Regardless of legitimacy or whatever, I was sure anyone would want to follow a person like her. There was a saying that a person's status wasn't determined at birth, as their status would change according to their efforts. However, Charlotte looked like someone born to become an empress.

It felt like I was watching the growth of a great man I had seen only in fairy tales when I was young. I almost even agreed to change factions.

"*Ah*, by the way, I know that a strange rumor has been spreading…" she started.

"…"

"They're absurd rumors like having commoner's blood, debauchery, and flirtatious noises that can be heard every night, but they're not worth responding to," she continued.

I expected it, but it seemed like she had already caught on to it.

"I haven't found the culprit yet, and even if I did find them, it'll still take some time to dig out the source of the rumors. However, I have a hunch about where it started," she added.

"I'm not sure which rumor you're referring to, Your Highness," I said.

"I'm not telling you this because I want you to notice the rumors. You just need to listen. If the apology and the offer I made earlier was the carrot, then what I'm about to tell you now is the stick," warned.

"…"

"I'm not the type of person who hesitates in using a sword against my enemy, Brother Lee Ki-Young. I know that you're an important figure to the empire, but if you really turn your back on me, I'll have no choice but to use my sword. So, I suggest you make a wise choice," Charlotte threatened.

'Shit… '

“You’ll find the answer when you think about how my father; no, how the emperor has no adviser next to him,” she hinted.

‘Shit… ’

“Compromising this time may be a good experience for you,” she suggested.

‘If I could, I would give everything I have.’

Naturally, I thought about how annoying things would get once there was an actual conflict, but I had to take care of my own business. Since I had received a special order to stop the second princess from becoming the empress, I couldn’t be in the same boat as her.

Charlia was finally done with her speech.

“If you’re willing to compromise, get on your knees, and kiss my hand. I don’t like to repeat myself. This will be the last carrot and stick. Next time, I’ll unsheathe my sword,” Charlotte warned.

“I’m sorry…” I apologized.

I had already made my decision, and I had no other choice. It wasn’t too late, but it would be ridiculous to turn back even though my desire to change factions was filling me up inside…

‘If I compromise once, I’ll have to keep doing it.’

I knew what kind of person Charlotte was just as much as I knew Charlia, who was anxiously running over here. As such, I couldn’t accept Charlotte’s offer. What Charlotte wanted was the well-being of her people and to achieve that, she would keep demanding that I compromise. The result would be pretty obvious by then.

When I glanced to the side, I noticed Charlotte faintly smiling. I didn’t know what that smile meant, but she looked as if her assumption was correct.

“Remember what I told you in the beginning, Brother Lee Ki-Young. People do not change easily,” Charlotte reminded me.

It was ridiculous how she immediately turned her back to me without saying

goodbye.

I knew what Charlotte meant, but I didn't think Charlia was that bad.

"You did well, Princess," I complimented.

"Are you sure?" Charlia asked.

"Yes. It was an amazing speech," I replied.

Charlia was good at doing the things I told her to do, and she had finally realized the fact that she was now spreading her wings. I was certain that not even a rogue would cause trouble at a time like this.

'I'm sure she's not that dumb.'

Unfortunately, it didn't take long for my unwavering belief to fall apart.

Charlia was *that* dumb.

CHAPTER 275
THOSE WITH LIMITATIONS ARE BOUND TO EXPOSE THEIR TRUE COLORS (1)

Everything was going smoothly, and despite leaving after making a comment that made me anxious, Charlotte remained quiet. The fabricated information we spread was starting to reach the nobles and the public. I could tell that the forces against the Eight Seats of the Empire were increasing, but in the end, the Dawan members decided to work with us, so the situation wasn't all that bad.

Of course, there were a few uncertain variables, and the reason was that Charlotte's faction was a lot bigger than I thought. The speed at which they gathered was faster and more meticulous than I thought and supporting Charlia, who was basically a fool, meant that I had a lot more to lose.

'It's bound to be that way.'

Charlotte's faction wasn't just big. There was a strange bond among them, and they also seemed as if they were heading toward one goal. In addition, the members themselves weren't bad either. I was sure there were people in her faction who were only there because they thought it was more beneficial to support her, but the majority of their faction's key members were respected by the citizens.

'Noblesse oblige.'

They were practicing it, and the power they possessed wasn't small.

I had been trying to win over the people beneath us, but of course, it wasn't easy. Even meeting the nobles I was close to was starting to get difficult. Even though we talked at social events, the key nobles avoided meeting alone with me. They had unknowingly started neglecting me.

Charlotte's connections were a lot bigger than mine, and naturally, I thought I had to have more power. At the least, I had to be on the same level as her so that I could easily convince the indecisive ones.

Obviously, we continued to promote Charlia's legitimacy by saying, *"Charlia inherited the emperor's blood."*

We exaggerated when promoting the first princess and spread negative rumors in places the second princess couldn't see. As a result, the situation I wanted was made. People gathered, and I became influential. The problem was that the majority of the nobles on Charlia's side were scummy. The power they possessed wasn't small, but the majority of the nobles in Charlia's party were old orders.

'They're old gramps like Lee Seol-Ho.'

It was a geriatric sleazy party, which was unsuitable for young and innovative people. Those were the kind of people in Charlia's faction.

Lady Caitlyn and Lady Elise, who were close to me, kept sending me positive signals along with Count Castlerock and Lady Marilyn, who were grateful to me, but as the head of their own families, they were having a hard time deciding.

The only thing I could do in this situation was to create an image for Charlia. Showing that she had changed was the only way to convince the indecisive nobles. I understood very well that my life depended on this, so I put all my heart and soul into it as if I was playing a game about raising a princess. Of course, Lee Ji-Hye was working hard, but I was certain that I was more tired than her. After all, unlike her who didn't have to see the first princess, I had to keep staying close to Charlia.

'Shit… '

Basically, I had to clean up after her. Not only did I have to comfort, compliment, and cheer up this grown adult, but I also had to check her outfit, so I was naturally exhausted. However, this wasn't the end of it. Aside from work, personal activities, and conversations with questions that were getting longer, I could feel her trying to invade my space from time to time as time went on. She even asked about my relationship with Cha Hee-Ra and Jung Ha-Yan. All she had done was ask about what I thought about her, but because of my unique habit, I was worried about getting involved in another crazy situation.

One thing I was relieved about was our difference in status, and that could be a hindrance to Charlia who was proud about inheriting the emperor's blood. If she really didn't care about her bloodline, then she really did inherit the emperor's

blood.

Anyway, Charlia was following the schedule I had given her without any complaints. The idea of being recognized by those around her was the driving force behind her actions, and the public's opinion of her had completely changed. It hadn't been that long since we started, but the first princess's reputation was slowly improving. And even though she was at the center of a geriatric sleazy party, she was starting to build her own power.

'It's the most important moment… '

No matter how many times its importance was emphasized, it would never be enough. Charlia was still lacking, but this incompetent first princess was now standing at the same starting line along with Charlotte.

Unlike Charlotte's faction whose power was well organized, there was an ongoing turf war among the scummy old gramps within the geriatric sleazy party. It was a good thing Charlia trusted me the most. Otherwise, I would have also participated in their bickering.

It was a long conversation, but the result was good enough for me to nod my head. However, I was kind of worried about how Charlia would accept this situation. This change might feel *too* fast to Charlia since she still hadn't done anything yet, but if she knew her place, she shouldn't make a fuss. Even if power made her arrogant, I thought that she would at least understand the situation, as she was now standing at the starting line. However, that was my mistake.

'Shit, shit!'

The confidence I had in this dumb woman was my mistake.

As usual, Charlia was having tea with Lady Caitlyn, Lady Elise, and Lady Marilyn. However, while I was in the bathroom, something ridiculously absurd happened.

'Dumb bitch. Dumb bitch!'

I couldn't help but realize what Charlotte meant when she said, *"People don't change easily."*

The peaceful atmosphere from earlier had long disappeared, and the situation before

me was really chaotic.

"*Kyaaaaah!*"

"*Ahhhhh!*"

Lady Marilyn was holding her face while rolling on the ground, and Lady Caitlyn was trying to help her. It was just absurd. Charlia looked kind of annoyed, and something must have triggered her as she looked down at Lady Marilyn while huffing and puffing. Meanwhile, Lady Elise was just standing there with a stupefied look. I was expecting a scene of four ladies giggling and strengthening their friendship once I came out of the bathroom, but who knew something like this would happen?

I had no idea why this happened, but I knew why Lady Marilyn was rolling on the ground while holding her face. Dumb Charlia was holding a small teapot, and there was no liquid inside the teapot. Charlia must have thrown its contents at Lady Marilyn.

I was so shocked that I stood still, but when I heard Lady Marilyn's pained cries, my body reacted first.

"*Ahhhhhh!!*"

"L-Lady Marilyn!"

"B-Brother Lee Ki-Young! S-She… How dare she!" Charlia stuttered.

During all this, Charlia spoke to me as if she had been waiting for me to arrive, but right now, she wasn't important. After ignoring her, I immediately went to Lady Marilyn and carried her after checking her condition.

"Lady Aris, a priest…" I requested.

"I-I already called for one," Aris replied.

"Thank you."

'Charlia's more incompetent than a maid.'

When she saw how desperate how I looked, Charlia had to have finally realized her

mistake because her face slowly distorted. If she were making that expression because she disliked the current situation, then I would probably crack her head open with a Dragon Breath Potion.

M-Mr. Lee Ki-Young… it hurts. It hurts! *Heuuuuk*… it hurts," Marilyn cried.

"Hang in there, Lady Marilyn. Wait, Lady Aris! There's a potion in my bag. Let's use that for now!" I ordered.

"*Ah*, okay!" the maid answered.

"Lady Caitlyn and Lady Elise, if you could take care of Lady Marilyn for a moment…" I asked.

"Of course, Brother Lee Ki-Young."

This wasn't the time to be picky. Since her face was covered in hot tea, I was sure she was in pain. I could treat her wounds, but it could be a problem if her eyes got injured. No, if she ended up with a scar, then it would be even more difficult to fix this issue.

Aris ran over with my bag. This kind of situation must have been their first time because Lady Elise was crying and Lady Caitlyn was doing her best to calm Marilyn down while biting her lips.

"It hurts, Mr. Lee Ki-Young… *Heuk*… I can't see. *Waaaaah*…" Marilyn cried.

"Please hang in just a little longer, Lady Marilyn. I'll treat you right now. A priest is coming, so it'll be okay," I reassured her.

In contrast to Charlia who was watching us in a daze, Aris handed me the potion as if she was a nurse assisting me. I immediately opened the bottle and poured the high-quality potion over Marilyn's face. I had always been carrying a potion around in case of an emergency, and it was a good thing I had developed that habit.

"I'm going to pour one bottle over your wounds, and you'll drink the other bottle. It has a pain-killing effect, so I'm sure you'll feel better," I instructed her.

'She must get better.'

“Okay… okay… okay…”

“Slowly… Open your eyes slowly,” I told her.

“Okay, Mr. Lee Ki-Young…”

‘Shit.’

I wasn’t a doctor, but anyone could tell that Lady Marilyn’s eyes right now weren’t normal, but since it hadn’t been that long since the incident, I was sure she would recover.

“It’s going to sting a bit,” I warned her.

“P-Please hold me tight, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. *Heuk*…” Marilyn requested.

“Sure, I’ll do that.”

When I grabbed her hand, it was trembling. It was natural for her to be scared.

When I slowly poured the potion into her eyes, I felt her body tense up as she screamed.

“*Aaaahhh!*”

“It’ll be fine, m’lady. Just hang in there. It’s healing,” I told her.

“Okay… *Kghhhhh*…”

After lifting Lady Marilyn again, I immediately kicked the door open. Lady Caitlyn followed me and Lady Elise’s face was covered in tears. During all this, Aris was in the middle of bringing a priest over.

Lady Marilyn had to have gotten exhausted after constantly screaming because her body became weak.

The most urgent matter had been taken care of, and now it felt like the situation had calmed down a bit. When I spoke as if I was talking to myself, I immediately heard an answer.

“We need to move Lady Marilyn to a place where she can rest comfortably. I think it’s best to do the remaining treatment there,” I suggested.

“The emperor granted me a room that’s not too far from here, so I suggest we go there, Brother Lee Ki-Young,” Lady Caitlyn offered.

“Thank you, Lady Caitlyn.”

“It’s nothing. I’m only doing what’s right. Is Lady Marilyn okay?” she asked.

“I’m sure she’ll be fine. I don’t think it’ll leave a scar, and her eyes will recover as well. By the way, how did this…” I stopped.

“It’s a long story, but… While that crazy woman, Charlia—no, the first princess was talking to Lady Marilyn, Her Highness suddenly threw a teapot filled with hot water at Lady Marilyn. Lady Marilyn hadn’t done anything rude to Princess Charlia, Lady Marilyn was just talking about how close she was to you…” she explained.

“*Ah…*”

“Princess Charlia acted up so suddenly that I couldn’t understand what was going on. I’m trying to remember if Lady Marilyn had done something rude toward the first princess, but I can’t think of anything,” she added.

‘Shit.’

I had expected it, but it seemed that Lady Marilyn really hadn’t done anything wrong.

Even as I placed her on the bed and the priest was using their holy magic, my thoughts started to become complicated. Lady Caitlyn and Lady Elise worriedly looked at Lady Marilyn, and it was only natural since I was sure they were horrified. The hot water must have splashed onto their faces as well because when I looked at them closely, I saw burn marks. It seems like they didn’t have the luxury to take care of themselves because the situation had simply been *that* intense.

‘It’s over.’

All my hard work had gone down the drain.

I finally knew why Charlotte hadn’t actively shown any response all this time. It was

all because as someone who had observed her older sister for the longest time, she already knew—she knew that Charlia was a hopeless idiot who would destroy herself if left alone.

'Shit! It's all over. We're really screwed!'

CHAPTER 276
THOSE WITH LIMITATIONS ARE BOUND TO EXPOSE THEIR TRUE COLORS (2)

My options were limited.

Fortunately, Lady Marilyn managed to recover, but she had to rest. Actually, the word—*fortunately*—didn't really fit the current situation. Lady Caitlyn was still shaking in fury, while Lady Elise was standing there in a daze, so she still had to be in shock. It was natural for them to react that way since one of the people they enjoyed having tea time with was badly injured. I also felt bitter. Even though I hadn't really paid much attention to Lady Marilyn, we still had a bond, and I felt bad seeing her suffer like this. During all this, the thought that was taking over my mind was how I was going to fix this issue.

'What's there to fix? Shit… '

The problem had no answer. These were the people contemplating returning to Charlia's faction, and we needed them in our faction since there was an ongoing geriatric sleazy party. They could be considered *real* nobles, as their territories were close to the Republic's borders. They were the central force among the eastern aristocrats, and there was a powerful military force behind them. They were completely different from the gramps who only knew how to lie down with their mouths wide open, hoping that they could get some benefits. So, Charlia was not only rude to these important guests, but she even threw hot water at them. As such, there was no way to fix this. I was sure that they now thought badly of me as well because I urged them to join Charlia's faction. And unfortunately, it seemed that a reconciliation was impossible.

I also had to choose between Lady Caitlyn and Charlia. The sleeping Lady Marilyn was still holding onto my hand, and that was when Lady Caitlyn started talking. She must have noticed how bad I felt because it seemed like she was trying to comfort me.

"There's no need to feel bad, Brother Lee Ki-Young."

“I’m really sorry,” I said.

“No, you didn’t do anything wrong. Even if I were in your place, I never would have imagined that something like this would happen,” she told me.

“I’m ashamed of myself,” I added.

“No, you shouldn’t However…” she paused.

“Yes?”

“I understand what you’re thinking and your plan, but I think it’ll be difficult for us to walk down the same path as you, Brother Lee Ki-Young,” she confessed.

‘Damn it… ’

I knew it. If they told me that they would remain with me despite what happened, I would have called them saints, rather than nobles.

“I know you’ve been taking care of us. You made a place for us and helped us in many different ways, but…” Lady Caitlyn stopped talking.

“I understand, Lady Caitlyn, Lady Elise,” I responded.

“For your sake, we won’t join the second princess’s faction. However…”

I was sure there was something else aside from not joining the second princess’s faction. And no matter how much they badmouthed Charlia, I was sure it wouldn’t help them feel better. However, even if she was a member of the imperial family, there was a limit to her actions. If the nobles heard of today’s incident, they would destroy Charlia, and to make things worse, the sleazy gramps may even leave her faction.

After all, who would want an empress who would cause them harm?

After sighing, Lady Caitlyn continued talking.

“However, the first princess must take responsibility for this incident. We’re going to submit an official report to the emperor about this, and we’ll make sure the first princess receives a fair punishment.”

“I fully understand. I also… I will also do everything I can to make sure the first princess receives a fair punishment,” I told her.

I had no other choice because if I didn’t take their side right now, they might pair me up with her and label me as their enemy. I was more than grateful that they had decided to remain neutral and Lady Caitlyn must have liked my answer because she nodded and continued talking. This wasn’t a fight between factions. She was sincerely giving me advice.

“Brother Lee Ki-Young, I know you’re smart, but as someone older than you, I’d like to say one thing. Being with the first princess won’t do you any good. It’s best if you withdraw when you have the chance. I thought that the first princess had changed, but through this painful experience, I realized that people don’t change that easily. She’s a vicious person with anger management issues. I trust that you’ll make the smart choice, Brother Lee Ki-Young.”

“I’ll make sure to keep that in mind, Lady Caitlyn,” I said.

That was all I could say…

‘Damn it. Damn it.’

Count Castlerock would hear about Lady Marilyn’s injuries sooner or later, and I was worried about what he would do since he really cared for his daughter. I was also anxious about Charlotte taking advantage of this opportunity to attack, as well as the emperor’s reaction, who would surely think of Charlia as a lost cause once more.

‘All she had to do was drink tea… ’

Rather than drink, she threw it. Charlia seemed to have thought that her position had already changed significantly.

‘Stupid bitch! Piece of trash!’

“We’ll look over Lady Marilyn, Brother Lee Ki-Young. You should go back—”

“It’s fine,” I said, interrupting her.

“You don’t have to worry. The first princess is by herself in the living room, and she’ll need someone who can handle this issue responsibly. To be honest, we don’t have

the courage to see her again. We leave it to you," Lady Caitlyn confessed.

"I understand."

I felt bitter. After squeezing Lady Marilyn's hand one last time, I bid goodbye and returned to the place where the incident happened. And what I saw was a complete mess. Broken—fallen decorations were everywhere, and an empty potion bottle was rolling on the ground. Charlia's group of maids also showed the same symptoms. Aris, who always reported to me, had swollen red cheeks. Unable to contain her anger, Charlia must have gone on a rampage because Aris was cleaning outside while crying.

"Lady Aris," I called out.

"Brother Lee Ki-Young!" Aris exclaimed.

"Your face…" I pointed out.

"This is nothing. By the way… the princess has been urgently looking for you," she informed me.

"Before that, you should get treated first. You'll feel better if you keep it in your mouth," I instructed her.

H-How could someone like me receive something so precious…" she stuttered.

"It's fine. I'm repaying you for helping me earlier. Right now, is the princess…" I paused.

"*Ah*… well… she's extremely angry. She must have gotten really shocked when you neglected her and ran off. She ordered us to find you as soon as possible. Did you not run into any other maids?" she asked.

"I didn't. We probably missed each other," I replied.

"You should hurry and go to her. I'm sure she's very sad," Aris suggested.

I was certain she was trying to say that Charlia was a mentally ill woman in the nicest way possible.

I continued to offer her a potion, and Aria eventually poured the potion into her mouth and kept it there despite feeling burdened. When her cheeks puffed up and she started moving her mouth, I was certain that the injuries in her mouth had healed.

"Actually, I'll lead you there," Aris offered.

"No, it's fine. I can go by myself," I declined.

"But…"

"You just need to clean this place with the other maids. I'll try to comfort the princess," I ordered.

"*Ah*, okay."

I honestly had no idea how I should comfort her.

I had an idea about what happened. While I was gone, I was sure the ladies had been talking about me, and the topic excited Lady Marilyn so much that she couldn't stop talking about me. I had no idea what she said exactly, but she may have brought up the engagement story from back then. She could have also talked about the letters we exchanged and about what happened at Castle Rock. She didn't show it on the outside, but Lady Marilyn was like a girl in her teens following her favorite singer around. Unable to suppress her anger, Charlia threw a teapot at her. And that was probably the whole story.

I thought about the possibility that Lady Marilyn might have provoked her, but it was unlikely. After all, she was kind of weird, but she wasn't crazy.

When I strode and opened the door wide, I saw Princess Charlia, and it was ridiculous how she looked at me as if she had been wronged. I was at a loss for words when I heard what she said.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young! You're here."

"…"

"Did you hear from Lady Caitlyn or Lady Elise about what happened? I-I don't know what they told you, but that idiot Marilyn kept saying strange things…" Charlia said.

"…"

"She kept on saying ridiculous things like she might get engaged to you, Brother Lee Ki-Young. I just couldn't stand it when she kept saying absurd things like how you two exchanged a lot of letters. I-I wanted to protect your honor, so my hand unknowingly…" she stopped talking.

"…"

"I didn't expect the situation to become this serious, but that bitch deserved it. She's just a count's daughter… and she didn't know her place…" she added.

"She's not *just* a count's daughter, Princess Charlia," I commented.

"It's fine. I understand what you're worried about, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. However, our boat won't sink just because we can't obtain the power of the small aristocrats on the outskirts. We have gathered a lot of forces already…"

Not only did the boat sink, but it already sank into the Earth's mantle. Riding a boat with this woman was more dangerous than riding a boat with Jung Ha-Yan and even though I had realized it a bit too late, I was now certain of it.

"Count Castlerock is not a small aristocrat. He's one of the loyalists who protected the empire from the threat of the Republic for the past decade, and Lady Marilyn is his most precious daughter. The size of their territory is small, but the symbolism of the Castlerock Family and the amount of trust the citizens have in their family is unimaginable, Princess," I explained.

"I-It'll be fine. Even so, a crazy bitch like her…"

Charlia was completely out of it. Rather than talking about how to fix this situation, we had to talk about whether she was okay or not first. She had done it intentionally, but she wasn't aware of just what *exactly* she had done. When I saw how she cooled down and quickly made excuses, I felt pathetic trying to turn someone like her into an empress. I felt ashamed just imagining Princess Charlotte looking down on me.

"It's the same for Lady Castlerock and Lady Elise. They're more valuable than the scums who joined your faction," I told her.

"*Ah*… But… Then, how about we find a weakness…" she suggested.

“They’re not idiots either. They’re going to submit an official complaint to the emperor, and you’ll receive punishment from His Majesty the Emperor. Even if you’re the emperor’s daughter, you can’t just treat a devoted noble of the empire like that. It’s not a matter of whether they’re going to join your faction or not. They might even completely turn their backs on you,” I informed her.

“W-We did well until now, so I’m sure…” she stuttered.

“We have done nothing so far that can help fix this. Things that are easily built are bound to collapse easily. You haven’t achieved anything great, Princess. You’re just about to start from the starting line, yet you have already destroyed the tower we were going to continue building. And with this incident—”

“I-I told you it’ll be okay!” Charlia exclaimed.

“What?” I asked.

“I-I told you before that it’s okay. Once I become the empress, I-I can fix everything!”

The way she was shouting was so ridiculous, and she must have surprised herself as well because her eyes widened. It felt like she was telling me that she didn’t want to hear me nag anymore, so not only was I surprised, but I even felt like laughing.

CHAPTER 277
UNWANTED PLAN (1)

I imagined throwing the Dragon Breath Potion, but it was unfortunate how I couldn't do that in reality. The oblivious Charlia gained even more courage when she saw my dumbfounded face because she continued talking and obviously, they were absurd words with neither evidence nor logic.

"I-I'm sorry for yelling, but there's a reason why I told you that, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. No matter how serious a problem is, I can fix it all."

"What?"

"Up until now, I've been cowering in the corner because I had no power, but now, look at the nobles who gathered under my name. Even when you compare my faction to Charlotte's, I'm not lacking at all," Charlia added.

'What kind of bullshit are you saying?'

"They gathered because of my legitimate bloodline. They're supporting me," she continued.

'That's not true… '

"I-I'm sure father thinks of me differently now. Once I become the empress, everything will be fixed. Yes. It will. My father will soon realize who should really ascend the throne. I'm sure he will. And Mr. Lee Ki-Young, when that time comes…" she paused.

"Yes?"

"I'm going to make you the prime minister of the empire. I'll make sure that happens," she said.

'I never said I wanted it.'

It was amusing how Charlia looked as if she had prepared an incredible gift. It was like she was saying, *"Surprised? I prepared this gift for you."* Whatever she would say in this situation would obviously be unrealistic. I wanted to tell her that she shouldn't get excited like this and say those kinds of comments, even after she was chosen as the successor. However, I couldn't trust her words anymore after she had destroyed the tower I worked so hard to build.

'This isn't right… '

Of course, I wanted to change sides. I guarantee that unless a person were as loyal as Admiral Yi Sun-Sin[1], they had to be thinking about changing sides by now, as Charlia's boat had already sunk. I was a passenger on the boat, so I knew it better than anyone else. Even if there was some kind of miracle, it was impossible for Charlia to ascend the throne. As someone walking on a single path, this was the first time my instincts were screaming at me. It screamed that no matter how hard I tried to convince her, Charlia wouldn't change.

'I need to get out as soon as possible.'

Despite my thoughts, my body was quietly nodding because I thought it was more realistic to agree rather than tell her, *"Let's stop showing people that we're working together."* Naturally, I looked kind of surprised. I was cursing her in my thoughts, but I had to maintain my usual attitude.

"*Ah*, I see. I didn't know you thought that far ahead…" I commented.

"If you continue helping me, I'll never forget your kindness, Brother Lee Ki-Young," she said.

"Of course, I'll continue helping you like what I have been doing, but if what happened today happens again, then it'll make things difficult," I warned her.

"I know. I-I agree that I had been a bit hasty, but that crazy bitch Marilyn—"

"Yeah, yeah," I said, cutting her off.

I let everything she said go into one ear and out the other. If I kept relying on her to do what I need her to do, I might pass out from anger.

She definitely thought I was feeling better because it was ridiculous how she kept on

talking. She was smiling while talking about various topics, but I wouldn't see that smile anymore in a few days. Once Lady Caitlyn, Lady Elise, and Count Castlerock were done submitting an official complaint, the emperor would have no choice but to punish her. Things may seem like they were going her way right now, but in less than three days, she would definitely realize that something had gone wrong, and of course, my assumption had never been wrong.

Before dawn, the angry Count Castlerock visited the empire and spoke to the emperor for hours. The emperor couldn't ignore him because he wasn't a low-ranking noble but a noble who had been fighting hard for the imperial family. In addition, even if he were a low-ranking noble, the emperor still wouldn't be able to ignore him. After all, the emperor was so desperate to strengthen the power of the empire that he created the Eight Seats and even put on a show, so he was sensitive about Count Castlerock's complaint. I didn't know what they talked about, but the emperor locked Charlia in her room. Of course, the sleazy nobles officially apologized or put on a show to apologize to Lady Marilyn, but there was no way Charlotte would let this opportunity pass.

Like fish in water, she proved that the legitimate princess was useless, and her words swayed public opinion. Maybe it was because of the sleazy party's last resistance, but Charlia was allowed to meet a few people. The fact that I was one of the few people wasn't good news because she even personally said my name. I was in a bit of a predicament because Lady Caitlyn and the nobles of the east had expressed that they wanted to keep their distance from Charlia. It didn't matter if my relationship with the other nobles was ruined, but out of all my connections, the connection I had with the ladies was the most important. It was probably because I had been treating them well, but as I mentioned before, it seemed like they understood my situation from the political aspect of it; however, if I were them, it would be hard for me to look at myself in a good light.

The atmosphere suddenly changed within a few days, and it changed again after a few days. The stocks that were doing well suddenly plummeted in market value.

"Have you heard? Lady Marilyn, the daughter of Count Castlerock…"

"*Ah*, of course. Princess Charlia threw hot tea at the lady's face… Are the rumors true?"

"It is. Coincidentally, I saw Mr. Lee Ki-Young running while carrying Lady Marilyn. I

didn't know what was going on at first because I couldn't really see through the window… But I had never imagined that something like that would happen."

"It's a good thing he was there with her because she was almost blinded. If he was even a little bit late…"

"It's so hard to imagine. I'm sure Count Castlerock is really disturbed."

The noblewomen chattered about this all day, and the influential nobles exchanged opinions about this.

"*Tsk*. Even if she is the first princess, it's just really hard for me to understand how she could do this to Castlerock when he has been quietly protecting Castle Rock for the empire."

"Maybe there was a reason behind it…"

"Even if Lady Marilyn was rude, throwing steaming hot tea is just—I'm saying this since it's just us here, but even Princess Charlia's maids don't look good. It's obvious how she usually acts. You need people for an empire to exist, so I can't believe how badly she has been treating those beneath her…"

"I'm certain the emperor is very disturbed as well."

"He must be really disappointed because he even started drinking wine last night… I still remember vividly how happy he was when he heard that the first princess has changed. It would have been better if he didn't have any expectations."

Even worse, the Eight Seats, who trusted me and joined the first princess's faction, also started questioning me.

"By the way… is this okay? The atmosphere is bad… Please don't hate us if we decide to leave the faction, and I trust that you'll explain it well to Miss Cha Hee-Ra. *Ah*, we're not saying that we're dropping out from the faction, so don't worry."

"If you have other plans or if there's something we can help you with, let us know."

I couldn't say anything when Yu Ran and Cheon Kwan-Wi of Dawan said that to me. The fact that Kim Hyun-Sung was busy while I was experiencing this hardship was one of the reasons why I felt bothered. Our lovely regressor started moving around

after leaving this task to me, and I had no idea what he was up to. He did support me in various ways when I was still making the plan, but something that required his attention must have happened.

Meanwhile, Cha Hee-Ra reacted as if there wasn't anything that could be done if I failed, and as expected the members who weren't interested in politics thought the same way. They weren't wrong because even if Charlotte became the Empress, we wouldn't suffer from it. To be exact, she wouldn't physically harm us. She wouldn't hang us for treason, nor would she make us rot in prison for the rest of our lives.

However, it was a different story for me. The fact that I had joined the wrong faction was basically showing that I had lost my foundation in politics, which I considered most important. Charlotte had already recognized me as her enemy, and she would do her best to take my power away. A long fight had to be started once again, and no one would want to be in the hellish position where I was standing.

'As long as I'm alive' was a story of the past. Even if I die, I had to achieve one more thing.

'Nasty bitch.'

My situation was basically hell. It wasn't like I didn't want to contact Charlotte again, but the second princess was spiteful. I knew that not only would she not accept me, but she was probably even thinking about how to ambush me from behind while openly showing her hostility toward me. I wasn't sure if I should feel relieved, but the nobles in her faction sent me warnings.

'I shouldn't be telling you this, but… I'm telling you because I care about you, Brother Lee Ki-Young. It's best if you stay quiet for the time being.'

They were planning something among themselves. My connection with the nobles was starting to sever little by little, and the only ones remaining were those I had made a connection with early on. Of course, I went around and met people, but getting the result I wanted was hard. Naturally, there were forces that wanted to follow the Eight Seats, but I had to be cautious about that, so I couldn't openly create a group.

In the end, the only person I could rub shoulders with was the emperor. I had no choice but to head to the emperor's room while thinking about whether I really

needed to develop an elixir or not.

'I'll serve you faithfully, Your Majesty.'

My loyalty that had been with Charlia temporarily moved over to the emperor once again. The most important task was to re-establish my foundation once this entire situation died down and to do that, the emperor had to stay healthy.

The emperor's maid greeted me and the door opened from the inside. I often met with the emperor recently, but his condition seemed to have gotten worse. He had been drinking a lot of wine, so it was obviously going to affect his health. Basically, the first princess's crazy act was giving the emperor a one-way ticket to heaven. The emperor was the most important person to me right now, as he was the only one I could rub shoulders with. At least, that was my thought until recently.

"*Ohh*… you're here," the emperor greeted.

"How are you feeling, Your Majesty?" I asked.

"I'm always the same… I'm okay…" he replied.

"You need to recover soon," I told him.

"*Hahaha*… I'm always healthy… By the way, Brother Lee Ki-Young," he said.

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"Did you… meet Charlia today?" he asked.

Until I felt that he was trying to pass his mess on to me.

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1. He was described as a man of arms loyal to his country and king ☜

CHAPTER 278
UNWANTED PLAN (2)

In the empire, the first princess's existence was annoying. The emperor knew that very well, and he didn't give her a lot of work as a result. He was worried that she would cause trouble somewhere.

'That's not the only thing… '

He was worried about her as her father, but if I were the emperor, I wouldn't be able to take a good look at the first princess. Charlia was fine right now, as she was under the emperor's protection, but once he returned to the arms of the Benigoa Goddess, it was obvious what would happen. The second princess would ascend the throne without issues, and I was sure the first princess would receive some sort of penalty. If she caused the same problem she had caused recently, then she would receive more than disciplinary action. However, as her father, I was sure he was worried about doing that.

'But this isn't right. It really isn't… '

If this old man had a conscience, then he would never think about doing that. I was kind of worried because he looked more serious than usual, but we were thinking about different things. However, despite my luck, the mood and tone of the old man were different from usual, and they were telling me that he had a goal in mind.

'I'm sure that's not it… '

He wouldn't make an offer unforgivable even in hell. My guts kept warning me, but I had to do something right now. I had to stop him before he said it.

"I actually saw her briefly this morning," I answered.

"I see… is her condition…"

"She looked somewhat mentally unstable, but she seemed like she had realized her mistake," I replied.

“It’s a relief if that’s really the case…”

I didn’t want to talk about Charlia anymore.

“By the way, Your Majesty, I heard you drank yesterday, too…” I said, changing the subject.

“I did. I actually called you here today because I thought it would be a good idea to drink together, and there’s something I need to talk to you about…” he said.

“It’s not good for your health, Your Majesty,” I told him.

“*Hahaha*. You seem to be really worried about me. Even if others said the same thing, it sounds different when you say it… It’s very interesting,” he commented.

“I’m sure everyone wants you to be healthy, Your Majesty. You may be feeling that way because you trust me more than you trust others.” I pointed out.

“You’re right. I do trust you, Brother Lee Ki-Young. Yes… of course. While we’re on that topic…”

“*Haha*, I better do my best to repay your trust in me,” I said.

I tried my best to change the subject, but it wasn’t working. The emperor seemed really determined. All this time, he didn’t seem like there was something on his mind, so seeing him act this way was even more surprising.

‘It might not be what I’m thinking.’

It could simply be my imagination. He might have a different issue, or he might talk about something completely different. No matter how problematic Charlia was, I was just a foreigner, not a citizen of the empire. No matter how I thought about it, it would be problematic.

When the emperor quietly raised his hand, a couple of maids came up and started pouring wine. Drinking wine with only the emperor was a big honor, so I didn’t know why I was so nervous. My nervousness caused me to change the subject a few times, but like a truck with a broken handle, I couldn’t stop the emperor from saying what he wanted to say. In the end, the emperor told me what was on his mind, and I had no choice but to curse at the fact that my assumption was correct.

“By the way… what do you think of Charlia, Brother Lee Ki-Young?” the emperor asked.

‘This psychopathic bastard!’

He wouldn’t ask that unless he was a psychopath. I did think for a moment about how I should answer him, but there was nothing else I could do other than change the subject.

“Unlike the public opinion, I believe she has a great character. Even though she has a fiery personality with anger management issues, her personality makes her unable to hesitate in carrying out the plans I had made for her. She’s determined, driven, and responsible with her tasks no matter the cost—”

“No, that’s not what I’m asking, Brother Lee Ki-Young,” the emperor interrupted.

“Your Majesty. I apologize, but I-I don’t… quite understand what you’re asking. Did the first princess cause trouble again?” I asked.

“No, that’s not what I meant. Maybe it’s better if I ask bluntly. Right now, I’m asking you… what do you think about my daughter, Charlia, as a woman?” he clarified.

The emperor was definitely a psychopath.

“W-What do you mean…” I muttered.

“It’s… like I asked,” he replied.

‘Shit.’

I wasn't sure what I thought of her as a woman.

I wanted to tell him, *“Honestly, if I were given the chance, I would throw a Dragon Breath Potion at her,”* but I couldn’t tell him that. I even wanted to grab the emperor by his collar for trying to throw me into the depths of hell.

‘You should clean up your own mess rather than asking me to do it.’

It would be best to start off with a compliment and then express my rejection.

“I’m not sure how I should say it, but… P-Princess Charlia is as beautiful as a gem. Her voice is so pleasant that it’s heavenly, and she always has this gracefulness that does not put unnecessary attention on her noble bloodline. She’s not suitable for a foreigner who doesn’t even know where he came from,” I answered.

I thought I answered it pretty well, but I guess this psychopath didn’t hear the last part of my answer.

“*Hahaha*, you’re right. Even though she has a bad personality, she takes her gem-like beauty from her mother. When she was young, she was picked as the most beautiful woman in the empire, so I’m sure she’s still as beautiful as ever,” he commented.

“*Ah*… yes…” I mumbled.

“At one point, she received many marriage offers…” he added.

“I see…”

“I’ve been holding on to Charlia because of my selfishness, but I think it’s time to let her go,” he said.

“*Ah ha*…”

He didn’t have to explain why those marriage offers stopped coming. It was possible that the emperor and Charlia didn’t like any of them, but I guarantee that they kept their distance after realizing the kind of person she was. They had to have realized that they would lose more than they would gain if they got married to the first princess. And it was the same for me.

‘I won’t get anything out of it.’

The first and second princess’s relationship was like oil and water. Before talking about becoming a member of the imperial family, a connection with the first princess basically meant making the second princess an enemy. Even though I was already her enemy, I didn’t want to deal with her even closer.

“To be honest, I was very disappointed in the recent event and thought about many things,” the emperor confessed.

“I see…”

“I had expectations for Charlia after hearing many stories about her, but after the recent event, I realized it once again. She’s not a suitable ruler for everyone,” he added.

“But that’s not—”

“I want to see her have a family before I die, Brother Lee Ki-Young,” he said.

“I-I’m sure she’ll be able to,” I commented.

“Yes, she must. That way… I’ll feel relieved. I can’t just leave that child…” he paused.

“P-Please don’t say such a thing. You’ll be a healthy ruler of the empire for a long time,” I told him.

“*Hahaha*, thanks, Brother Lee Ki-Young. You knew, right?” he asked.

“…”

“My first and second child; they don’t exactly get along. To be honest, I’m worried that once I leave this world, the second princess will treat her older sister badly. I had experienced it myself and my father, the previous emperor, had experienced it as well. Charlotte is intelligent, but she’s not afraid to get her hands dirty to get what she wants, and I’m sure she’ll do the same to her older sister,” he explained.

‘Shit… ’

“Charlia. That fool is still my daughter. I want my first daughter to live a safe and peaceful life. If it’s someone she likes and listens to, then I’m sure she can throw away her greed and live a happy life,” he added.

“I don’t… understand what you’re trying to say, Your Majesty,” I said.

“*Hahaha*, I thought you were quick-witted, but you seem slow about these things,” he chuckled.

“I’m sorry.”

“I heard why she did what she had done to Lady Marilyn. I raised my voice at the child while confining her to her room. I’m not sure if you noticed, but that child

thinks about you a lot and the reason why she's calm all this time is that she seems to like you," he added.

"…"

"According to her, she said that you seemed to have feelings for her as well…" I mentioned.

'What kind of bullshit is this? Shit.'

Obviously, I had never expressed something like that to her, so it seemed like the crazy woman was talking nonsense. It was so ridiculous I couldn't help but laugh.

"I thought about many different routes, and in the end, I can guarantee that this is the best choice. Yes, I'm sure of it," he continued.

"Your Majesty…"

"Please marry Charlia," he requested.

'You evil bastard!'

The emperor blurted out the conclusion of the conversation before I could even say anything, and I couldn't help but clench my fists. I completely understood why he came to that conclusion, but I could only think about running away. If it were possible, I would have run out of the castle as fast as I could.

"I have some land in the north. I can't say it's a nice place, but it's quiet and out of the public's sight," he added.

I knew about it. And that place was extremely cold without much food. Most of the northern territories within the empire were like that.

"The nobles may oppose giving land to a foreigner, but if it's you, I'm certain they'll agree to it. It won't be such a bad idea to go there with Charlia and live a comfortable life. Charlotte won't do anything to her sister in a remote area, and if you decide to take her hand, I'm sure the other foreigners won't do anything extreme as well since it's you," the emperor continued.

"W-Well… that's…"

“Don’t worry about the fact that you’re a foreigner. I think at this point, you could be considered a citizen of the empire. You’re more than worthy of her, as you’re an honorary bishop of the Vatican and have been appointed as one of the Eight Seats. I have my faith in you as well, so you don’t have to worry about the difference in class. Yes, you don’t have to, Brother Lee Ki-Young,” he emphasized.

‘Difference in class, my ass… ’

“*Hahaha*. I hope you’ll keep in mind that I’m being a bit greedy since I want to get a good son-in-law, Brother Lee Ki-Young,” he commented.

To make things worse, he had to be thinking that I was happy about this offer. When I looked at the emperor’s face as he was trying to throw an innocent man into the depths of hell, I couldn’t help but take this seriously.

CHAPTER 279
UNWANTED PLAN (3)

It felt like these three members of the imperial family were trying to make me go crazy, and I was starting to hate this old man as well. Even worse, I was starting to resent our lovely regressor, Kim Hyun-Sung, for placing me in this predicament. I wasn't sure when it happened, but I had already acknowledged the second princess as the empress. It wasn't because there wasn't any hope for the first princess, but I thought the recent incident had made it apparent. As the emperor mentioned earlier, he was thinking about helping the first princess live a safe life, but the issue was that he was sacrificing me for his plan.

'Anyone with a brain wouldn't want to settle down with her.'

The moment I accepted his offer, a few people would lose their lives. It would be a lot of work to stop Jung Ha-Yan, and Cha Hee-Ra may find it uncomfortable as well. I was sure that if I settled down with the first princess in the north, she would be found dead the next day and the mastermind would be obvious. Actually, agreeing to go north with her was basically saying I was giving up the central power. I didn't think it was a bad idea to live the rest of my life farming on the outskirts, but I had no intention of abandoning the gold bars I had with me.

'I have to decline it no matter what.'

I didn't want to live a secluded life at such a young age.

"Your Majesty," I started.

"*Hahaha*," the emperor chuckled.

"I… appreciate the offer, but… as you know I currently—"

"*Ah,* I'll allow the mage attendant who's always with you, and the Mercenary Queen from the Red Mercenary Guild," he interrupted.

"What… do you mean…" I asked.

"Asking you not to meet those you've been meeting is a bit excessive. *Hahaha*. Charlia is quite the jealous type, so she'll probably give you a hard time, Brother Lee Ki-Young. Yes, I'm sure that'll happen," he replied.

'This isn't something you should talk about while laughing… '

Seeing him say that while smiling made me think that this old man had really become senile. Not even Park Deok-Gu would plan something like this. However, this wasn't the time for me to think about the emperor's feelings.

"I think… I need to talk about it first, Your Majesty," I told him.

"Of course. It's an important decision to make, so I'm sure you need time to think. I understand," he acknowledged.

"No matter how much I think about it, it's a burdensome offer… Of course, I'm thankful for the offer, but I honestly can't decide if I'm a good fit for Princess Charlia," I added.

"Being too modest can become poisonous. *Hahaha*. You're not lacking at all, Brother Lee Ki-Young. Yes, you're not. Who would say that my son-in-law is lacking? Think about it carefully. Since nothing has been decided yet, the conversation we had today…" he paused.

"Yes, I'll make sure no one knows about it," I assured him.

"All right. It's pretty late. You should head back. *Ah*, I understand how you feel, but I'd appreciate it if you could give me your answer as soon as possible," he requested.

"Of course, Your Majesty. I'll give you my answer after thinking about it carefully," I said.

"Yes, of course."

"I'll take my leave, Your Majesty," I said.

"Be careful on your way back, Brother Lee Ki-Young."

'Shit.'

The moment I turned my back on the emperor, I almost cursed. I figured that trying to drive me crazy wasn't enough for this imperial family, as they were now trying to ruin my life. I had experienced a few annoying situations in my life, but the emperor's plan was the worst of them all. I had to find a solution, and my options were—sticking with the first princess again and making her the empress, finding a third party who would take care of me, or openly bringing the Vatican into the imperial family.

The fact that Kim Hyun-Sung didn't tell me the exact reason why the second princess couldn't be the empress limited my movement, which was annoying. Basically, his request was a bit too much. I appreciate that he thought highly of my skills, but turning the first princess into an empress was impossible no matter what method I used. In addition, I was also told not to completely ruin Charlotte, so I felt like I was playing chess without the important pieces. My opponent was too strong for me to fight while carrying a large baggage called Charlia.

'I'm getting stressed… '

Despite staying still, I was annoyed, and naturally, I started looking for our regressor. I had to stop by my room anyway, so when I quickly opened the door, I saw Jung Ha-Yan lying on the sofa in a strange position. I was speechless when I saw my outer garment on her face, and I decided not to think about what she had been about to do.

"Ha-Yan?"

"O-Oppa? Y-You're here…" Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

"Yeah, it has been a while…" I said.

"Yeah, it has…" she mumbled.

When I spoke with a shocked tone, she quickly placed my clothes to her side and stood up. It wasn't like her to be this embarrassed. For Jung Ha-Yan's sake, I thought it would be best to change the subject, so I brought up a reasonable topic to talk about.

"How's Lindel?" I asked.

"It's good. We have… we have been making progress on the research. And Deok-Gu oppa is doing well and… Han Sora… Yoo Ah-Young… and Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo and Mr.

Chang-Ryeol, they all succeeded in capturing a rare-ranked dungeon," she replied.

"That's a relief. Let's catch up later. I have work to do. Have you seen Mr. Hyun-Sung?" I asked.

"I think he's coming back late today. H-He seems really busy recently. According to Miss Hye-Jin… she said she also hasn't seen him that much nowadays," she answered.

"Is Miss Hye-Jin in her room?" I questioned.

"Yes. I ate with her," she answered.

"Could you call her for me?" I requested.

"O-Of course!" she exclaimed.

Since Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't here, I had no choice but to ask Jo Hye-Jin, his adjutant.

To hide her embarrassment, Jung Ha-Yan quickly ran out, and moments later, she came back with Jo Hye-Jin. It had been a while since I saw Jung Ha-Yan, as she was busy in Lindel, but it had been even longer since I saw Jo Hye-Jin, even though we weren't that far from each other. I started feeling bitter when I realized just how busy I was these days.

It seemed that Jung Ha-Yan had no intentions of leaving me alone with Jo Hye-Jin, as she sat down in the corner and as always, Jo Hye-Jin bowed toward me and sat at the table. She had to have been going through some hardships, as she didn't look too good.

"It's been a while, Miss Hye-Jin," I started.

"Yes, it has been, sub Guild Master," Jo Hye-Jin said.

"Have you not been moving with Mr. Hyun-Sung?" I asked.

Her expression turned dark, even though I just asked her out of curiosity. It was probably because she was experiencing some hardships inside. Despite coming to the capital as Kim Hyun-Sung's attendant, he had been wandering around by himself, and as someone with a strong sense of responsibility, I understood why she felt ashamed. My assumption had to be right because Jo Hye-Jin nodded and talked.

“Yes, the guild master seems focused on his personal work recently…”

“I see.”

“Now that I think about it, there’s a message the guild master has asked me to deliver to you, Mr. Ki-Young,” she mentioned.

‘I knew it.’

“Go on,” I told her.

“Well… it may be difficult, but he’s leaving it up to you… He said he’ll finish up his task as soon as possible and join you when he returns,” she said.

“…”

I was speechless. I hadn’t been expecting a solution, but I couldn’t agree with just waiting endlessly.

‘This mean bastard… ’

The emperor was still alive, and he wasn’t sick enough that he couldn’t move around. If Kim Hyun-Sung knew when the emperor would die, I would understand his intention for prolonging this fight, but even now, my political influence was decreasing, so I didn’t have the luxury to just sit around and watch. As a coward, I had no choice but to prepare for the things about to happen and think about the variables.

The emperor’s words had cornered me. In addition, the power the first princess and I had established would be destroyed the moment the second princess made her move. It was possible that Charlotte may openly push for our meeting. It would be a good chance for her to banish the two people she disliked, so if I were Charlotte, I would actively support the two. Naturally, I became even more stressed than before. Even I could feel how annoyed I was with my tone of voice.

“Excuse me for asking, but you have no idea what Mr. Hyun-Sung has been up to?” I asked.

“I don’t. Even now, I don’t know what he’s doing. But…” Jo Hye-Jin paused.

"Yes?"

"He… seemed like he was looking for someone," she continued.

"Looking for someone?" I asked.

"Yes. The guild master looked as if he had no idea who he was looking for. It's unusual how he has been attending social parties, like masquerades, even if they were far… it felt like he's wary of his surroundings more than usual," she explained.

"*Ah*…"

"I offered my help in case he needed it, but he shook his head. And he told me it was more comfortable for him to move on his own…" she paused.

"He started going to places where you couldn't reach him," I said.

"That's right. I do feel bad because I feel like I haven't been doing my duty. I should have been a more supportive attendant…" she muttered.

"No, no. It's not your fault, so there's no need to feel guilty about it, Miss Hye-Jin. I'm sure he's planning something," I told her.

'I wonder if it's important… '

I knew Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't lazy and knowing that he had been moving around after leaving me with that request meant that the situation he had to handle was an urgent matter. I had no idea why he had been attending masquerades nor who he was looking for, but I was sure that what he was doing would be really important for the future.

'I need to be understanding.'

I was frustrated and angry that my influence was decreasing, but it was likely that whatever Kim Hyun-Sung was doing right now was more important than acquiring political influence.

'I still have a lot of time. Yeah, I should be understanding.'

As I mentioned earlier, the emperor was healthy, and since Kim Hyun-Sung knew

what was more important, he must have decided that his current task was more urgent.

'Yeah, that's the right thing to do. He has to take care of the more important matter.'

However, I couldn't help but pout. I completely understood that he was tired, but I felt like he was neglecting me a little too much. There was no way a family could be happy when the head of the family was constantly working and neglecting them. It was like the wife was massaging her own shoulders and back because she was tired, and her husband was always at work saying that he would give her a comfortable life. What the wife needed were words of comfort and encouragement, but her husband was focused on working. It wasn't the best example, but that was the only analogy I could think of.

'Shi… '

No matter how much I thought about it, this anger wouldn't just go away. I was curious about what he was up to that he had to completely neglect me.

'So to him, his task is more important.'

It was probably because I was angry at the imperial family, but I started to get upset at Kim Hyun-Sung as well.

'Should I turn the tables?'

The condition was that the second princess couldn't be the empress. As long as I made sure that wouldn't happen, what would happen afterward didn't really matter to me. And as long as the second princess couldn't make a comeback, it may not matter if I used a method that was a bit violent.

'Yeah… let's do that.'

The corner of my lips went up.

CHAPTER 280
UNWANTED PLAN (4)

"It's not your fault, Your Majesty," I[1] said.

"You don't need to comfort me. There was nothing we could do," Charlotte told me.

"No. It's not a matter of justifying it as being inevitable. There could have been many other ways. We should have looked for other ways. Yes, we should have done that," I expressed.

"The decision was made for the people. The innocent citizens were killed by my hands because of those people," she said.

"More people would've died if we didn't do that. The knights and soldiers who are protecting the empire and the many innocent people who look up to you would have all died. That plague—" I paused.

"I know. I know it very well. We need to take care of it before the symptoms start to show. We didn't have any other choice because it was airborne, and there was no other way to save the contaminated land. But Count Kim, they haven't turned into the Undead yet. I'm certain they were still humans. Their painful cries weren't the cries the Undead makes. It sounded like the cries of children, I'm certain of it," she explained.

"What are you…"

"I heard them talking to me. The citizens who died because they had been betrayed by a stupid empress like me, they were criticizing me," she added.

"You seem exhausted, Your Majesty." I pointed out.

"No, I'm not. I'm certain I'm fine," she argued.

"Your Majesty…"

"When I was young…" Charlotte started.

“Yes?”

‘When I was young… before my mother passed away, I recall her telling me this.’

“…”

“She told me not to be a difficult person and enjoy every moment of my life while living quietly and ordinarily. She told me to live peacefully like the others on the outskirts and away from the imperial castle. I recall her telling me something similar when she passed away, but I was very young back then,” she confessed.

“Your Majesty…”

“I’ve been watching the kind of hardship my mother had experienced in this place. I know deep within me how those with no power are treated. That’s why I wanted to change the empire by becoming the empress. I brought down my sister with my own hands, betrayed my father’s expectations, and even got blood on my hands. I’ve fought the Vatican and foreigners like you. That’s how I became the ruler of this empire,” she continued.

“…”

“After being in this position, I realized I was no different than them. No, I was no different from them from the start. To protect my position, I got blood on my hands once again and lived that way for a few years. I lived like that because… because I was afraid of losing power. My oath to create an empire for the people was suppressed by exhaustion and burden. The dream I had since I was little was torn to pieces by reality. When I suddenly looked at myself in the mirror, the face of my older sister, whom I hate a lot, was reflected in the mirror,” she added.

“That’s not true, Your Majesty.”

“This position doesn’t fit me, and I realized that now. I’m not capable of bearing the crown, and I won’t be able to wash away my sins. It’s hard. Yes… I’m very exhausted. As my older sister had said back then… In the end, a commoner’s blood couldn’t bear this burden,” she went on.

“Your Majesty…”

“If I were reborn… if I could, then I would want to live the life my mother told me to live.

I want to try living like others. Like others… I want to meet the love of my life, laugh, and have a lot of children and a family… That's how I want to live," she admitted.

"I'm sure you'll be able to," I commented.

"Haha. It's not that I haven't thought about marriage, and if it's with someone like you, I'm sure I'll live a very happy life. Anyway, let's stop the small talk. We need to get up," she said.

"It'll be better if you rest. There's no need for you to take charge," I suggested.

"I'm fine. We need to wrap up the remaining tasks. We need to burn the people and protect the empire," she reminded.

"Your Majesty."

"Today… tomorrow… and the next day, we need to kill the people and… like that… Ha… Hahaha. We need to protect them." She laughed.

I opened my eyes and grabbed the sand on the ground. I was certain this was the place. This was where I had that conversation with Charlotte and killed innocent people. This was the ground zero of the plague that turned ordinary people into the Undead and killed a quarter of the continent's population.

When I opened my hand, the wind started blowing the sand off of my hand, and as I stared at it absentmindedly, I saw people before me. I realized that I had spent too much time immersed in my emotions.

"H-How are you…"

"So you know me…" I pointed out.

"…"

"The rumors must have reached this place. I'm sure ordinary people won't recognize me," I added.

"No, no. H-How could people like us not notice such an important person like you? B-By the way… what brings you… here? Do you have business with this small village?" the villager asked.

“I came out to investigate. I received a report about an organization that used forbidden magic, so I came out to check… Based on your reaction and the current situation, I guess the report was right. Who would have imagined a place like this existed underground?” I said.

“I-I apologize, but I-I don’t quite understand what you’re saying,” they said.

“Secret organization, Saladan. A union of black mages within the empire. It was founded twenty-four years ago with about 670 members, and they are evenly spread out in the outskirts of the empire. The purpose of this union was to grant eternal life to the organization's members. Am I wrong?” I questioned.

“W-We don’t really understand… what you’re saying,” they said.

“I’ll ask a few questions,” I told them.

“Yes?”

“Have you met a man and a woman wearing masks?” I asked.

“What… do you mean?” they asked.

“It’s a black mask with no expression. A spell was cast on the mask, and only a high-ranking mage can dispel it. The man’s height is average, and the woman is small. They call each other best friends, and they’re actually close. *Ah*, the man is also a black mage, like all of you. If he came here, I’m sure you would have noticed him. He might have joined Saladan as well,” I described.

“A black mage?”

“Yes, a black mage. If you have seen him—”

“I’ve never heard of them. W-We don’t know what you’re t-talking about,” they stuttered.

“It doesn’t look like you’re lying,” I commented.

“Of course, we’re not lying. We don’t know anything about Saladan or b-black magic, sir,” they answered.

“It’s fine. I made that comment because it seemed like you didn't know anything about the masked people. I have already confirmed that the people gathered here are black mages, so there’s no need to hide it. I have also met other black mages from Saladan. Gartell of the north, Valla of the south, Hebel of the east, and this is the fourth place,” I revealed.

“You… crazy…”

“Let me change my question. If you have never seen a masked man… where’s your clan master?” I asked.

The room was silent, and even though they still looked like they didn’t know anything, I heard the sound of a spell being manifested when I was about to talk again.

“D-Die!”

Black and green spheres, as well as arrows instantly flew toward me, and when I swung my sword as I lowered my body, a sphere was cut in half.

‘Poison.’

It was an uncommon spell. When the substance from the sphere fragment landed on my clothes, I heard a sizzling sound as smoke started rising. I instantly held my breath using magic and started moving my feet. The moment I ran with my sword out, a large monster jumped out from a summoning circle and attacked me. I had seen this low-ranked demon before. After inserting mana into my sword, I swung it and killed the monster. Then, I severed a black mage’s arm and killed a black mage about to cast a curse spell.

‘One demon summoner and one necromancer.’

Soldiers made out of bones appeared everywhere, but when I swung my sword in a wide motion, the soldiers crumbled and the necromancer collapsed while spitting out blood. It was the same as last time.

‘Their ranks are low.’

It wasn’t too strong. Compared to my past life, they had definitely gotten weaker, and it was hard to believe that they were the same Saladans who had instilled fear in the

entire continent. They didn't have a demon summoner who could summon named demons, and they could only summon low to mid-ranked demons. It was also difficult to find those who had undergone a fourth job change among them.

'Did something happen?'

The masked man who would claim himself as their leader a few years later was probably behind it.

'They haven't met yet… '

I didn't know exactly when the man started making his move, but I figured that he still hadn't made a move. Since he still hadn't made a move even though the fight over the throne was already underway, it meant that he wouldn't start until way later. This wasn't the right time for that man to make a move, and since I wasn't really looking for him in the first place, it wasn't really easy to him find.

However, it was kind of difficult for me to understand why the woman still hadn't shown herself. At this point, I could remember her making her move within the castle. In my past life, I had no reason to visit the castle, but when I visited the capital, I could recall her moving with the influential nobles in Charlotte's faction.

'Is she hiding? Or did the future change? If she's planning something, there's no reason for her to hide… '

Even when the second princess was politically threatened, the woman still hadn't shown herself, so it was possible that something had changed the future. Since the masked woman had spent a long time with the Murder Brigade along with the magic swordsman, Jung Jin-Ho, it was possible that she didn't have a place to settle down since Jung Jin-Ho was dead. If my assumption was correct, then luring out the masked woman by cornering the second princess had never been guaranteed in the first place. The masked woman was still nowhere to be found in this second life of mine, and Jung Jin-Ho's death in the tutorial dungeon may have caused this positive butterfly effect.

When I slowly walked underground, I started seeing Saladan's research results. I couldn't recognize many of the things here, but after considering the fact that these results had started the plague, they were items that shouldn't exist on this continent. As expected, they were still in the early stages of their research.

When I cast a spell in my hand, a fire appeared, and the fire that landed on their research materials burned brightly. I kept recalling the citizens screaming in pain as they burned alive, as well as Charlotte's face as she went crazy, so I shook my head to get rid of those bad memories. However, I kept on hearing her voice.

"I want to wake up listening to the birds singing in a quiet forest. It may be hard, but I want to try living a life without maids, and I want to listen to a wandering minstrel's song at the bar. Yes, I want to live that kind of life. I think I liked you a little bit. Now that I think about it, I think I did. I have never loved anyone, so I don't really know my feelings, but I'm certain it's similar to the feeling my mother mentioned. Please be happy, Count Kim. In the next life, let's meet in a more ordinary situation. Let's meet while smiling," Charlotte requested.

I bit my lips lightly and immediately turned away. After exiting the big underground area, I saw a village that wasn't any different from before.

'Huh?'

I saw a very familiar face on one side of the village square.

'What the?'

The figure had tried to disguise himself using magic, but he couldn't hide his big frame. The person was one of the Blue Guild's original members.

'Mr. Deok-Gu?'

I had no idea why Park Deok-Gu was here since this place was on the outskirts of the continent and was far from Lindel and the capital, but I was certain that Mr. Ki-Young had asked him to run an errand for him. And that had to be the case because he was probably busy calming down the public opinion at this point.

'I wonder what's going on… '

I was naturally curious. The fact that they were on the outskirts meant that they had received an order.

The crowd nodded and were cheering for the big man's speech. I walked over out of curiosity and used mana on my ears. The information I heard from the voice that was strangely drawing me in was something I hadn't expected at all.

“By the people! By the people of the empire! A country for the people! The empire’s owner is not the imperial family! It’s the people!” Park Deok-Gu yelled.

“W-What’s… going on…”

This definitely didn’t happen in my past life.

“With a burning hunger! With a burning hunger! Long live democracy!” he exclaimed.

“What the…”

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1. Kim Hyun-Sung’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 281
UNWANTED PLAN (5)

Even after rubbing my[1] eyes, the person yelling was still Park Deok-Gu. I was surprised to see him here, but seeing him yelling with clenched fists was even more surprising.

“The people are the owner of the empire! Think about it! Who has the sovereign power of the empire?!” Park Deok-Gu yelled.

“It’s His Majesty of course,” someone replied.

“That’s not true! That’s definitely not true! The empire only exists because of all of you! It’s the people that should have the sovereign power! All power should come from the people for the country to be a righteous one! Even if His Majesty has great power, what can he do if you’re all not here?!” he continued.

“Y-You’re… right! Indeed!” someone agreed.

‘What’s going on… ’

The person cheering in the crowd was also someone I could recognize.

‘Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo?’

On the outside, he looked like an ordinary citizen, but if you removed the illusionary magic around him, you could tell it was him. It wasn’t just him that I saw. I started seeing the Blue Guild’s staff members as well. They were uplifting the atmosphere by shouting.

“From the beginning, the Benigoa Goddess said that everyone living on this continent is equal! Think carefully, my dear people! Is this empire—that’s living under the protection of the goddess really fair? Think again! I’m a stupid guy, and I almost let my loving family experience poverty and hunger!” he explained.

“Oh, dear…”

“That’s unfortunate…”

“We were considered lucky if could eat corn porridge! The thieves living in the imperial castle are having parties while drinking alcohol and eating meat every day! Do you really think that’s fair?!” he continued.

“You’re right!”

“Politics for the people and by the people! That’s what this land needs right now. To obtain what we want, we need educated people! We need to remind the self-proclaimed nobles who despise us that the empire belongs to the people!” he added.

“You’re right!” the people yelled.

“Of course, I’m right! We need to fight for it! They need to realize that even though we’re stupid, we can do something for the empire!” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

“W-What should we do?” someone asked.

“Whatever you can do! First, take a copy of this book! Our hyung-nim; no, a person who shares the same views as us wrote it himself!” he said.

“But… isn’t this considered treason against the imperial family?”

“Treason against the imperial family? The members of the imperial family are the ones who have committed treason against the Benigoa Goddess! Are you saying that we’re not even allowed to read this kind of book? How can this be considered treason when we don’t have any weapons, and it’s not like we’re talking badly about the emperor in front of his face? The empire belongs to the people and to the goddess, not to the emperor! Can you consider a country normal when they won’t even allow us to read a book? If you think that’s normal, then run to the lord right now and reveal my sin! I’ll gladly sacrifice myself for democracy!” he explained.

“L-Long live democracy!”

“Long live the fighter of democracy!”

“My name is Barkdeku! Barkdeku, the fighter of democracy!”[2]

I had to leave my post for a long time, and I obviously had no time to explore the

world. I had to be cautious whenever I was investigating Saladan, as well as the masked man and woman. I had to be discreet about it. I couldn't help but feel as though the world had changed when I saw this situation unfolding in front of me. From the old to the young, everyone was holding a book. And all of a sudden, I could hear an old man talking.

"Are you a foreigner?"

"*Ah*… yes," I replied.

"I heard that there's no king or emperor in the place the foreigners are from. Is that true?" he asked.

"T-That's true…" I stuttered.

"So a place like that does exist. *Ah*, try reading this book," he offered.

The book I accepted was pretty small and seeing that it was small enough to fit inside a pocket, they had definitely thought about censorship. Below the title, "*Sacred Democracy*," an unfamiliar author's name was written on it.

'Oscar?'

I had no idea who Oscar was, but as Mr. Deok-Gu had mentioned, I was sure the author was Mr. Ki-Young. When I opened the book, I saw a page filled with a lot of words.

[The people should be able to actively participate in imperial law. The human rights of the denizens must be guaranteed. The laws and the procedures of implementing the laws must be applied equally to all denizens. Human rights and equality are "basic rights" that denizens should enjoy. According to the will of the Benigoa Goddess, equality is not only for the empire but for all human beings living on this continent.]

'Huh… '

[The empire must maintain a welfare system that guarantees minimum livelihood for its people. The above is the contract signed by the empire and its people. The empire isn't being maintained based on vested interests but by the contract between the empire and its people. The people need to be aware of this. The sovereignty of the empire belongs to the people, and all the power comes from the people. We have to keep reminding ourselves of that fact.]

I felt like I had heard this from somewhere. He had included the logic of political scientists and was changing the people's thoughts on politics. I could tell he was using the Benigoa Goddess' doctrine, which said that all people under the goddess were equal as a shield.

'It's definitely Mr. Ki-Young's work.'

I could see his personality based on how he had written the book. As I turned the pages, I realized that the information I was reading was worth reading. The Vatican, which was another vested interest in the empire, was described separately from the empire. A lot of information was written in this book, but it only had one meaning.

"The equality of all men is—"

"The Benigoa Goddess' will. That's it! That's what Mr. Oscar is trying to tell us! You're quick to catch on, bro… Mr. H-Hyun-Sung? W-Why are you…" Park Deok-Gu stuttered.

The big man looked surprised.

"Mr. Barkdeku, let's talk for a moment," I suggested with a bitter smile.

* * *

'This will definitely work.'

When considering the fact that 99.9 percent of people were believers of Benigoa, it would be strange if this didn't work. I exaggerated a sentence that only appeared a few times in the holy book and interpreted it politically. And since I mixed religion with politics, this book would definitely gain momentum. Of course, the book had some flaws since Lee Ki-Young wrote it in a hurry, but the people wouldn't care about the flaws.

Men under the goddess were all equal. The weight and sweetness this sentence carried would be so charming that the people wouldn't be able to resist it. In addition, it may even look really sweet to ordinary clerics.

When I slowly closed the book while sitting in front of the bonfire, I saw Mr. Deok-Gu and Mr. Ki-Mo looking at me. The crackling sound the wood gave off sounded nice, but I had to bring this up.

"Could you explain this to me?" I asked.

Of course, I was curious about what happened today, but they also wanted an explanation.

"Wait, before talking about that, I think I need to say something first… What were you doing here, Guild Master bro?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"It's a personal business I must take care of. I'll explain the details once it has been taken care of, but just know that it's related to the black mages," I answered.

"Did you receive a request from the Vatican or the imperial family?" he asked.

"You can think of it that way. Then, Mr. Deok-Gu…" I replied.

"Well, I'm just running errands for our hyung-nim. This is the twelfth time already. He told me to start working from the place farthest from the capital and work slowly… You know Miss Lee Ji-Hye, right? I received a special order to distribute this book in places she told me to go to! Interestingly, I haven't seen a noble or a knight while I was doing this work. Isn't that right, Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo?" Park Deok-Gu explained.

"Yes, he's right. Since the forces are focused in the eastern region, the west side has been pretty calm. By the way, Guild Master, it has been a while since we saw you," Ahn Ki-Mo said.

"It's because I have been focused on my work…" I answered.

"I heard that it has been a while since you returned to the castle," Ahn Ki-Mo added.

"It turned out that way. There was something I had to deal with during my work… I was actually about to return, but I ran into you two. Was it… Mr. Ki-Young who wrote

the book?" I questioned.

"To be exact, he didn't write it all by himself… Miss Ji-Hye helped him. I think Miss Hee-Young has been visiting the castle often and helping them as well. Well, what does it matter? By the way, hyung-nim has been looking for you… Has it been so long since you two saw each other?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Yes, it's… been a while," I muttered.

"Hyung-nim has been looking for you a lot… *Tsk*," Park Deok-Gu mentioned.

"Is that so?" I asked.

"Yes, of course! It seemed like things aren't going well in the castle because he didn't look so good. To be honest, I think he's angry every day. He would pout with that particular expression whenever he's a little mad, and I feel bad for Ha-Yan noonim because she seemed to be walking on eggshells around him. That's why I came all the way out here and pretended to be Barkdeku, the fighter of democracy," Park Deok-Gu described.

"He seemed to be in a bad mood?" I asked.

"Yes, I definitely got that feeling from him," Park Deok-Gu replied.

"Then, this book…"

"He wrote this book out of frustration," Park Deok-Gu answered.

"*Ugh*…"

'It's understandable… '

I couldn't help but think that way, as I didn't pay that much attention to him after leaving him with that task. I thought Mr. Ki-Young would be able to complete that task and that he was the only one who could control the first princess. However, it would be rather strange if he weren't exhausted. After all, the Charlotte I knew was a competent empress, while Charlia was a hopeless fool. There were things I had to handle, so I had no choice, but I still had to take responsibility for my mistake. Mr. Ki-Young was usually a really trustworthy person, but I knew very well that from time to time, he would complain like this. Since we had spent a lot of time together, I had

an idea about the kind of person Lee Ki-Young was. It would be strange if I still had no idea, as he had shown the same reaction during Jo Hye-Jin's case and in other trivial cases as well.

'He's expressing his dissatisfaction.'

When I thought about what Mr. Deok-Gu had said, it was safe to assume that Mr. Ki-Young was using this method to complain.

'I didn't consider it… '

All I thought was that we still had a lot of time; I didn't think about the anxiety Lee Ki-Young would feel and the reduction of his political influence. The issue was that what he had done was too big and radical for it to be considered a simple complaint. There was a saying that the country and home must be at peace. I was so focused on my work outside that I had become careless about what was going on inside.

'Wh-What should I do?'

I had no choice but to think if I should get him a gift.

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1. Kim Hyun-Sung's POV ☜

2. In case it wasn't clear, this is Park Deok-Gu, but he's saying it differently. ☜

CHAPTER 282
PLEASE REVOLUTIONIZE (1)

“This will definitely work, oppa. I guarantee it. You’re really good at coming up with petty tricks. How did you come up with the idea to mix religion into it?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“Anyone would have had the same idea, they simply didn’t have the opportunity. Among the foreigners, excluding the priests, I’m the only one who has memorized the Benigoa Goddess’ doctrine. You thought of using the doctrine as well, so it’s not really amazing,” I explained.

“That’s true… but based on the mindset of the citizens, I didn't think they were ready to accept this kind of information,” she said.

“That’s not true. The level of their mindset is quite high. The second princess, who loves her people more than anyone, has been increasing their mindset level for a few years now. The situation itself could have exploded at any moment. There simply wasn’t anything to trigger it,” I said.

“That’s what you think of them? You think of the citizens pretty highly. Personally, I think the Benigoa Goddess’ doctrine was the number one contributor this time, and the people reacted better than expected. If we get lucky, the Vatican may even get involved, and their reaction will be even greater if that happens,” she said.

“I was telling you my personal thoughts because that’s what a civil revolution is all about. This type of revolution is mostly—”

“You were going to say that it’s the bourgeois revolution, right? It’s led by capitalists with economic power, but no control over them,” she asked, interrupting me.

“You’re right,” I replied.

Lee Ji-Hye nodded in response. When I saw her smile, I couldn’t help but think that she was enjoying this as much as I was.

'Of course, it's fun.'

Lee Ji-Hye and I had always liked these types of situations. Making the general public move according to our plans. She always experienced catharsis in situations like this, so of course, she was obviously obsessed with power.

When I raised my head, she looked at me as if she was telling me to talk, so I spoke with a smile, "Of course, I'll have to think about if I should apply the history and the events that happened on Earth here, but there's no guarantee that we can do it unless we fill in what we are lacking."

"What do we lack?" she asked.

"Military power," I answered.

"*Ah*, I understand what you're saying," she commented.

"The difference between this place and Earth is military power. The bourgeoisie on Earth only needed economic power, but we have to fulfill another condition here, so the progress feels that much slower," I explained.

"So you need to add military power along with economic power to the bourgeoisie rank of this world. No wonder there has never been a revolution," she said.

"I agree. I think the reason why the influential people of this place were able to obtain military power was because of their forces. Just by looking at the knights here, you can see that they can deal with dozens of citizens at once. So, do you really think those people will be able to rebel against a powerful figure? In fact, the preparation for the revolution is almost done. It's just that it hasn't been put into practice," I informed her.

"What are you basing this off of?" Lee Ji-Hye questioned.

"Poverty, hunger, inequality, the gap between the powerful and the underprivileged, and the growing awareness of the citizens. And…" I paused.

"You have the press," she said.

"That's right. The press is crucial. I can use the creation of the new bourgeoisie rank as an example to explain the existence of another type of people. The people with

economic and military power, but no control over them," I told her.

"The foreigners." Lee Ji-Hye pointed out.

"Yup…"

"There are more aside from them. Like private mercenaries or the mages cooped up in the magic tower. As you said, the conditions for a revolution are slowly being satisfied. They just haven't connected with each other, right?" she asked.

"I may be wrong, but that's what I think. The issue is how are we going to start it?" I mentioned.

There were other issues aside from that, but the biggest problem was that we had to move more radically. A revolution or reformation wasn't something that would happen naturally, so no matter how well they were planned out, issues were bound to pop up. Even if I got lucky and the plan succeeded, this empire would certainly experience some sort of side effect. Obviously, I wasn't a political scientist, so I couldn't guess the side effects nor was I interested in them. Trying to guess the issues that still hadn't popped up was beyond me, so I had no choice but to focus on the task at hand.

'It has to be handled as soon as possible.'

The existence of the Republic was another issue as well. It was just a simple imagination, but if a rebellion did happen, they would likely try to support the revolution taking place within the empire. It had to take place and be resolved all at once, as the longer the existing powers and their people fought, the more external pressure they would receive.

I was worried about losing people like Lady Caitlyn, Lady Elise, and Lady Marilyn, but I thought they would be well protected. The nobles respected by the people would take their place in the new rank, and it may seem forceful, but I had to ensure their participation in the revolution.

'I must… '

Among them, I was worried about the second princess the most. She would likely make the first move once she caught on to my plan, so I had to move cautiously.

'It could be ruined in an instant.'

A seatholder of the Eight Seats, a dragon's spouse, and an honorary bishop—all these would be meaningless once I was accused of treason. That was the reason why I visited the emperor with Charlia to continue the political fight while maintaining her faction. I may be able to turn their attention away for now, but I thought I would reach the limit at some point.

"*Ah*, noona. Has Princess Charlotte's party reacted to it yet?" I asked.

"No, they're pretty quiet. Charlotte hasn't shown much interest in it probably because she's busy trying to deal with the sleazy members of her faction. Now that I think about it, they're surprisingly quiet. Even if we're working discreetly from the outskirts, she's usually quick to catch on to bad comments about her, so I wonder why she's quiet…" she questioned.

"Right? Despite the fact that she spoke to me as if she was ready to cut my head off immediately, I feel like she hasn't been pressuring me that much lately. In fact, just a few days ago, I felt like I was suffocating. Maybe she's worried about the Vatican," I explained.

"It's possible. Or—" she paused.

"Or?"

"It's just my assumption… but… a thought suddenly popped into my head. Didn't you say that the second princess really cherished her people?" she asked.

I think I knew what Lee Ji-Hye was going to say.

"There's no way…"

"It's best to keep every possibility open," she suggested.

"Don't you think you're being too speculative?" I asked.

"I was just imagining it. There's no evidence, and if I were to write a novel-like situation, this might be the kind of situation she wanted. As you mentioned before, the second princess may have already realized that the foreigners are part of the new bourgeoisie rank they have been planning to implement. If she's interested,

even just a little bit, I'm sure she has noticed the various circumstances. Just seeing the press that had grown so big is enough to think about it, don't you think?" she asked.

"That's true…" I commented.

"If you didn't build the press, no one would have thought about doing it, but now, many media outlets have settled within the empire. In addition to the foreigners, the citizens have also established an imperial press and are selling their own news, so don't you think this is a sign? Unless the second princess is an idiot, I'm sure she noticed something the moment the imperial papers were published. Not only that, but a magic hologram is about to get released as well. If the second princess had caught on to the magic hologram as well, then I think it's possible that she wanted this kind of situation in the first place," she continued.

"So, you're saying that the second princess provoked me intentionally because I'm in the center of the new bourgeoisie rank? She intentionally suffocated and threatened me so that I would move according to her plan? All these to move a foreigner?" I asked.

"I told you it's a novel-like situation. However… it does make sense. She has been spending a lot of time with her people, and honestly, the way she tried to tame you felt kind of unnatural. She threatened you as if she was going to attack you with her sword, but it's not like she had stripped away your powers. Well, I can't say that she didn't strip you of your powers because she still hasn't even touched the force that has already been established. I'm assuming that's her way of attempting to bring you over to her faction again," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"If she wanted it from the start, she would have told me herself." I pointed out.

"If she did, do you really think you would have agreed to join her? In my opinion, I don't think you'll ever join her. You'll probably use that to backstab the second princess. Trash like yo—wait… how should I describe it? *Ah!* Feudalism and absolute monarchy are more advantageous to lovely brown-nosers like you. I'm telling you this because we get along so well, but if your tricks didn't work this time, I wouldn't have agreed to join the revolution or whatever. I would have just sat back and watched," she confessed.

I honestly couldn't deny it. If the second princess calmly talked about a revolution, I

would have used that as a weapon and backstabbed her. I kept telling myself that it wasn't possible, but I kept thinking about the novel-like situation Lee Ji-Hye had written. In fact, I suddenly started recalling the conversation I had with her at the imperial knight practice hall. At the time, I didn't think much about our conversation, but thinking about it now, there had been a lot of suspicious parts.

"It may have been rude, but I did a background check on you. I was more interested in things that were a bit different than the titles everyone knows, such as the Dragon's Chosen One or the Holy Empire's Honorary Bishop. The fact that you established the press in Lindel and brought various changes was the most impressive of them all."

Revolution…

"The Free Cities are independent of the empire, but they are bound to receive indirect influence. I knew this was the case because not long after you established the press in Lindel, something similar to the press was established in the empire as well. I also know very well that you at least have a conscience despite being a selfish human being. Whatever the reason, the things you have done have brought great results to the majority of the people."

A result in favor of the majority…

"I believe the reason why you're able to bring those results is that you care about how others see you. Actually, I'm certain of it. You care about how you're portrayed to the public. You may not compromise with those with power, but you're willing to compromise with the public."

A compromise for the public…

“It’s a compliment, so there’s no need to think about it. The empire needs talented people like you, Brother Lee Ki-Young. We need someone in politics who cares about the opinion of the public.”

When I thought about it, Lee Ji-Hye's words could be true. I had no idea why the regressor I kind of resented had told me that Charlotte couldn’t be the empress, but I was certain that some scum made her go crazy during her ruling. It was possible that this kind of campaign didn’t happen in his past life, so it was too early to make a decision. It wasn’t that strange when thinking that the situation had changed because the press was established earlier than usual. There were various circumstances, but we had no evidence, so we had no choice but to move cautiously, and during all of this, my suspicion toward her continued to grow. I was even suspicious of the final comment she made.

“I’m not the type of person who hesitates in using a sword against my enemy, Brother Lee Ki-Young. I know that you’re an important figure to the empire, but if you really turn your back on me, I’ll have no choice but to use my sword. So, I suggest you make a wise choice.” ~

Of course, I was curious about what she meant by turning my back on her. What did she mean by making a wise *choice* and what kind of person was an enemy to her? Nothing was clear. Assuming that this was what she really wanted to happen, I may be able to interpret what she said this way.

“I won’t hesitate to point my sword at the monarchy; however, you’re indispensable for this empire’s future. You’ll bring change to the empire, so you’re worthy enough to be called an important figure of the empire. However, if you really turn your back on my expectations and the public, I’ll draw my sword. So, please…”

“Revolutionize,” I said out loud.

"*Huh?* What did you say? What are you talking about all of a sudden? We're already doing it," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"Shit…"

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"I think you're right," I told her.

To be exact, Lee Ji-Hye and I had no choice but to join, but…

The second princess.

I had no choice but to acknowledge that Charlotte had the same goal as us.

CHAPTER 283
PLEASE REVOLUTIONIZE (2)

“Sacred Democracy,” they said.

“Excuse me?” I[1] asked.

“It’s the book a man named Oscar wrote. I’m certain that Brother Lee Ki-Young wrote and distributed it, and I’m sure everyone has read it already. The more I read it, the more I think that it’s an interesting book. I guess these types of ideas were common in the world the foreigners once lived in. I was aware of it, but this proves that our empire has been living in the past.”

“…”

“This book was written by one foreigner within a few days, and it denies the current imperial system. Anyone with common sense will know how the vested interests of the empire have been leading the citizens all this time with absurd ideas. What the author said was right. All humans are equal.”

“Your Highness… what do you think about the book?”

“It’s magnificent. Of course, it does bother me a bit that the author talked about democratization while using the Benigoa Goddess’ doctrine because it contradicts the ideology that we want. You shouldn’t expect too much during the first attempt. For now, I have no objection that this is their best. I believe the goddess’ will must be the foundation to make the citizens rise up since they’re still used to the imperial system. They could have also thought about receiving support from the Vatican. In some ways, using the goddess’ doctrine was a genius idea,” I replied.

“As expected…”

“It may have side effects, but it’s that effective. I’m sure it’s empowering the anxious citizens,” I added.

“I’m relieved that your plan has been working out, Your Highness.”

“This is only the beginning. What we do from now on is more important,” I informed them.

I saw them nodding in agreement. The bags under their eyes told me that they had stayed up all night reading that book and it was obvious why. This small book in front of me was no different from a brand-new type of holy book being distributed for the first time in the empire. It was a book that contained ideas, and the results of those ideas gave birth to the place where the foreigners came from. Of course, the book contained some corruption, but as I said before, this was something time would resolve. Right now, my top priority was to overturn the empire’s current system. My plan that I had been executing little by little for a long time was finally starting to bear fruit.

‘My prediction was correct.’

I was right. Cornering him would break the system down. I was surprised because it happened a lot faster than I had expected, but it felt like I was being reminded of how competent he was, so I was able to confirm once again that I had made the right choice.

‘I thought it was going to take at least six more months… ’

However, not even a month had passed, and a strange atmosphere had already started to form within the empire. Unlike me who had no idea how or where to start, he was doing his work perfectly, and it would be strange if I weren’t impressed.

A civil revolution. It was both a wish and a dream that had been in my head for a long time now. Now that I thought of it, all this started when I overheard the conversation between the foreigner Cha Hee-Ra and Victor Hart a few years ago.

‘Grandpa Victor, the place where we came from doesn’t have nobles or emperors, so I never got the chance to learn this kind of etiquette.’

It was just that one sentence, and even though I overheard it by chance, I kept on remembering her voice. I couldn’t understand it at the time because my head was filled with thoughts of becoming the empress, but I could remember it being the first time that I heard of a land that wasn’t being ruled by an emperor and without nobles.

‘Is that possible?’

Naturally, my head was filled with doubts. It wasn't completely impossible since the Republic was close to the empire, but I thought the Republic was in a worse situation than us. The Republic was biased toward special groups, and they advocated the liberation of all humans. However, their president possessed undisputed power under a one-party dictatorial system. I thought it was different from the land Cha Hee-Ra had mentioned, and as she said, there was no need to learn about etiquette in the continent the foreigners came from.

'They're equal.'

I tried my best to erase it from my head, but my curiosity only grew. After hearing just a few words, I became curious about the foreigner's continent even though I had never been interested in it before. I had many sleepless nights due to the frustration, and in the end, I had no choice but to make a move to resolve this curiosity.

I spoke to many foreigners and asked them where they came from, how it could exist, and how it was being ruled without an emperor. However, no one could give me a proper answer, as they were scared. It was considered kind of taboo to discuss their continent in the castle, so it was understandable for ordinary foreigners to feel frightened. However, the basic information I had obtained from them still astonished me. Electing a leader every few years, representatives elected by the citizens, impeachment, people's check on power, and their history—everything piqued my interest.

When my curiosity could no longer be resolved through the foreigners invited to the castle, I immediately headed outside. Obviously, I couldn't move around freely since there had been many eyes on me, but whenever I had the chance, I would wander around the free cities the foreigners had established. I wanted to see for myself how they lived, what kind of jobs they had, and what the new foreigners who had just arrived here looked like. Honestly, I was satisfied with the result of my exploration.

In contrast to my imagination which depicted the place as a utopia, poverty, and discrimination existed in the free cities. There wasn't an emperor, but there were leaders who had risen up because of their military power, and in some ways, it wasn't that different from the current empire.

When I was about to go home with doubts, I witnessed the birth of the press, and it felt like the world had changed overnight. I could even see how the world was changing in the eyes of others. The foreigners considered to be low rank had risen

up, and they had started boycotting those with power. I couldn't understand it. They used to be quiet as a mouse, but the way they united as one and moved together was like a smaller version of the stories that I had heard. The thing I thought would never change was starting to change little by little.

The Black Swan Guild—a large guild located in the Free City of Lindel—started walking on eggshells around the other foreigners back then and a few days later, the guild master was replaced.

"No way…" I commented.

The low-ranked foreigners had changed everything without bloodshed or injury.

'They achieved a bloodless revolution… '

I couldn't describe how shocked I was when I had seen it with my own eyes and naturally, my attention was on the person at the center of the incident. I observed Lee Ki-Young, the man the press treated as a victim at the time; no, it was more like he was the foreigner controlling the press. Using my power as a princess, I conducted a background check on him.

He entered the castle and tracked down the demon worshiper, Ito Sota. He had successfully protected Castle Rock, a dragon had chosen him, and he had also obtained a position in the Vatican. On top of that, the nobles loved him as well. Of course, there were things I didn't want to see, but it was more important to know what kind of person he was. I was more interested in what he was capable of doing. The weapons he had in possession weren't just the dragon or those potions he made. His eloquence and connections could also be considered his weapons; however, his strongest weapon was the press and the way he used it.

I couldn't help but think that I was learning from him. The incident that had taken place in Lindel was a new ray of hope and light to me.

'I need to prepare… '

I could change the empire.

'The people can rise up… '

I had to gather people with the same vision as me.

'I'm sure there are nobles and intellectuals who consider the current system as unjust. I'm certain of it.'

The foreigners would help as well.

'I have to use them.'

My hard work was finally starting to pay off. I hadn't actually achieved anything yet, but if someone asked me if I was happy, I would nod. And I nodded happily when I heard a voice.

"You seem to be in a good mood, Your Highness."

"I am. I know this is only the beginning, but it's hard to hide my happiness," I said.

"Excuse me, Your Highness."

"Yes?"

"I'm sorry, but may I say something?" they asked.

"No need to apologize. Please speak."

"Well… I was wondering what you're planning on doing once this is over."

"*Ah*, I'll be doing the same thing as all of you. I'll probably live a normal life for the rest of my life. It will be difficult, but I want my father and older sister to live a new life as well. I want to live the life my mother told me a long time ago. If it's possible, *haha*." I laughed.

"But Your Majesty, as I've said before…"

"I'm no different from the citizens. I only received a better education than them because I was lucky and thanks to that luck I could see more things in the world. I realized many things while I was trying to learn more about the foreigners. I'm not someone who can stand on top of others. I just want to live a normal life. Like them, I want to experience ordinary love and go on ordinary dates," I explained.

"It's like you to say something like that. *Haha*. Is there someone you like?" they asked.

"*Haha*. It's like you to ask something like that," I said.

"Maybe… the reason why you've been watching Brother Lee Ki-Young…"

"*Hahaha*, that's not the case. He does interest me, but he's definitely not my type. Actually, his superior is closer to my type. I have been talking nonsense in front of all of you. Anyway, let's wrap it up for today. We'll be busy again starting tomorrow," I suggested.

"Yes, Your Highness."

They left after bowing quietly. I quickly returned to my room and read *Sacred Democracy* again. The ideas I couldn't understand before were starting to become clearer in my mind. And I had a feeling that for the time being, I would be spending my time reading this book over and over again without realizing the passage of time.

"The sovereignty of the empire rests with the people and all the power comes from the people."

I was sure the citizens reading this book somewhere would realize that their situation wasn't so different from the foreigners. Some of them may be reading it in a stable, some in schools with no lights, and others may be relying on a small candle to read the book. There may even be people in the castle reading this book. The people would become educated by sharing the book and discussing with each other while avoiding the eyes of others.

This small holy book would be the beginning of the revolution, and it would also serve as the light for the people of the empire.

"He's a genius," I remarked.

I couldn't help but say that as I tightly hugged the small book.

"An honorable revolution."

If things went as planned, the empire would be able to take one step further without bloodshed.

1. Princess Charlotte’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 284
PLEASE REVOLUTIONIZE (3)

“Glorious revolution, my ass,” I commented.

“I’m certain that’s what she’s after. It’s obvious what she’s thinking. After calming the citizens who would rise up for the revolution, the second princess and the nobles in her faction are planning to change the system by putting pressure on the existing vested interests. She’ll probably say something like, *‘This is the will of the people!’* Aside from that, I can’t think of anything else because there’s no way Charlotte will support the bloodshed of her own people,” Lee Ji-Hye explained.

“That’s good. A bloodless and glorious revolution,” I commented.

“You don’t seem satisfied. Would it actually be better to stick with the first princess and make the second princess guilty of treason?” she questioned.

“I’m not doing that. You’re not supposed to work with an idiot like her, so all other options are out of the question. The revolution will happen,” I answered.

“Are you saying we should play along?” she asked.

“No, it’s a bit different from what Charlotte wants. What I want is a revolution created from the complete protest, not a glorious revolution. A revolution led by the citizens is different from the one led by the second princess’s faction, and I’m not saying this because I’m getting a tingling feeling behind me, noona. If that happens, then Charlotte will definitely remain a symbol of the empire. It also won’t be easy stopping the Republic from getting a piece of the revolution while the honorable revolution is happening… The more we drag it, the worse it’ll become. I’m just saying that trying to negotiate is unreasonable,” I replied.

“They probably have a plan, too. You’re not going to overturn everything just because you’re in a bad mood, right?” she asked.

“I’m not that scummy. I wouldn’t kill innocent people just because I’m in a bad mood. I have about a two percent royalty share of that book, but it’s not enough, so I want

you to think that I have a bigger reason," I told her.

"I mean, the oppa I know is that big of a sc—No, you're an amazing brown-noser," Lee Ji-Hye commented.

"Oscar will become the symbol of the empire rather than Charlotte," I added.

"*Ahhh!* So you're going to remain as a shadow ruler. That's good news," she said.

"It's honestly funny," I started.

"What is?" she questioned.

"Charlotte doesn't know what we have planned, yet she thinks she can stop the people from starting a revolution, but I'll show her. If she thinks sacred democracy is the only thing that exists, then she's wrong," I explained.

"She'll expect you to use the press to get them riled up and I'm sure she had made preparations for that. The second princess has a good image, so if we release mediocre information, I'm sure she'll be able to get it taken care of right away. Do you have something useful?" she asked.

"That's a secret. Try guessing. You can look forward to it," I answered.

"It's hard. It's a bit early to commercialize it, but I assume you're going to use the magic hologram… So the content that'll be displayed on there is the issue. If you want to finish this as soon as possible, you'll have to get the citizens all riled up. However, to make them angry, mediocre content won't work… Did you secretly film a noble beating up a commoner or something? Or did you film Charlia's usual behavior? Honestly, the filming time—*Ah!* So that's what you asked Miss Ha-Yan to do, and that's what you meant last time by having eyes that can't be seen…" she mentioned.

"Correct, but I'm still not going to tell you the content of it," I said.

"You have a bad habit. Well, since you're the one who prepared it, I won't worry about it, and it'll be best if you quickly decide who will act as the fighter for democracy, Oscar. It's important to charge at them without giving them time to prepare. Anyway, I'm going to head out now since I have work, oppa. *Ah!* This is from Mr. Deok-Gu. I think he included a letter so read it before you go comfort that crazy woman," Lee Ji-Hye suggested.

“Thanks, noona,” I said.

“*Ah*, also, Lady Marilyn sent you 44 letters,” she added.

“I’ll read those later,” I told her.

“Okay,” she said as she placed the letters on the table beside me.

I had some time left before I had to go and see Charlia. After thinking about the regular report Park Deok-Gu had sent me last time, I thought it was going to be another useless report. It was probably going to say, *“I miss you. When are you coming back?”*

He had to have included something else because it was thicker than usual. While I was thinking he had sent me some kind of a regional product, I ripped the letter sealed by magic and took out his letter. However, the handwriting was different from the one that I had seen from him so far.

[I’ve heard the issue from Mr. Deok-Gu.]

“Huh?”

[I’m sorry I couldn’t help you in many ways. I’d like to sincerely apologize for not focusing on my work completely after leaving you with that big burden, Mr. Ki-Young.]

‘Kim Hyun-Sung?’

The handwriting looked familiar, but I had never expected it would be him.

‘Why is he with Deok-Gu?’

I definitely recalled Park Deok-Gu working on the outskirts. I couldn't understand how he was with Kim Hyun-Sung when he was supposed to be working hard as the fighter of democracy, Barkdeku. Kim Hyun-Sung mentioned that he met Park Deok-Gu by chance, so it really made me fascinated by the connection people had with each other.

Anyway, he had to have a reason for writing a letter. It seemed like he was trying to explain something, but I wasn't interested in his excuse and seeing that he kept apologizing, he had to have realized that what he had done was wrong. I started nodding while reading his sincere apology. He was busy with a task, and he was trying his best to complete that task. Of course, this wasn't enough to wash away the uncomfortable feelings, but I was able to at least understand his recent actions.

[I was a bit surprised by the sudden change and unexpected circumstances, but since I left this in your hands from the beginning, I'll continue to leave it up to you. Honestly, I want you to think of a different method, but it must have been an inevitable choice for you, Mr. Ki-Young. I believe you'll minimize the damage while fulfilling a stable transition in power.]

I wasn't sure if he meant he could handle a little bloodshed, but it was probably similar. Kim Hyun-Sung was also thinking that a completely bloodless revolution was impossible.

[I have a feeling as to what you're worried about, Mr. Ki-Young. Out of everything, you're probably worried about the Republic's interference.]

'At least he's not completely slow-witted… '

[I'm not sure if I can be of much help, but I'll do my best to limit the Republic's interference as much as possible. I hope this task will help you with your plan, Mr.

Ki-Young. Thank you for your continued support, and I apologize.]

'That's a relief.'

This was definitely good news. He didn't react in a bad way to my plan, but the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung was in a situation where he couldn't be concerned with internal matters was the best news.

I had made the decision to overturn everything, but it was true that I was worried about what he would think about the citizens' sacred protest. Naturally, I was happy when he said he would take the initiative and stop the Republic from interfering.

'Nice!'

It was then that a sentence at the end of the long letter caught my eyes.

[There's a gift in another envelope on the back of this letter. I sent it to you because I think it'll be more useful to you than to me.]

"He didn't have to…" I mumbled.

The package contained Kim Hyun-Sung's gift rather than Park Deok-Gu's regional product. Obviously, I opened it excitedly, and I smiled unknowingly when I saw it.

"*Geez,* He really didn't have to get me a gift…" I muttered.

[Chanelia Hermes's Infinity Bag - Epic Rank]

"Wow… this is amazing…"

[This infinity bag was crafted centuries ago by the legendary hunter and leatherworker Chanelia Hermes. Made out of drake leather, the artisan made this bag for adventurers, so it is not only handy, but it also has the same durability as a piece of armor. True to its name, Infinity Bag, it's very spacious, and items can be stored safely. Its additional feature increases the adventurer's luck stat by three points.]

"I salute you, Kim Hyun-Sung, sir!" I shouted.

In any case, I needed this item, so my desire to dance and jump around in joy grew. Since my resentment toward him had disappeared, I had to be really weak against bribes. Moreover, this bag looked even better than the bag Kim Hyun-Sung had been carrying during the tutorial dungeon. I needed this bag because my job required me to carry various potions on my person. I wasn't sure how he suddenly got this item, but since he was with Park Deok-Gu right now, he probably looted a monster's treasure house in the middle of the night.

When I wore the bag, I thought it looked pretty good on me, and when I placed my hand inside, I caught something.

'He's clever, too!'

A high-quality catalyst was inside. It wasn't enough for my jaw to drop, but seeing that there were a lot of interesting items, he had to have selected them carefully. Obviously, I couldn't stop smiling. He sent me what I needed when I needed them, so of course, I was happy. In addition, it felt like he was conscious of my feelings a bit because he even said that he would support my plan. It seemed like he was concerned about me more than the second princess.

I was no longer pressing the brakes. I didn't like getting ahead of myself, but I started thinking that maybe it would be a good idea to start thinking about it after the revolution.

'We should execute it soon.'

The last task I was postponing even now. The final piece of the puzzle was who would play the role of Oscar, the author of *'Sacred Democracy*.' If possible, I needed

someone like Barkdeku, who could lead the revolution from the bottom up. They couldn't be a foreigner, and it would be kind of strange if they were a noble. They couldn't be dumb like Charlia or smart like Charlotte. Oscar, the leader of the reborn Holy Empire and the author of *Sacred Democracy* had to be somewhat smart, and they had to like me as well. Basically, they had to be someone I could control, but the problem was that there wasn't anyone like that around me because I had isolated myself from the commoners. Since I had been making connections with good people, I naturally met with nobles and members of the Vatican. But now, I couldn't help but think that maybe I should start going outside.

"Brother Lee Ki-Young, Brother Lee Ki-Young. The princess is looking for you," a maid called out from outside.

When I instinctively opened the door, I saw a face I often saw nowadays.

"*Oh!* Miss Aris!"

"Yes?" Aris asked.

"Please come inside for a moment," I requested.

"*Huh?* What do you… *Ah!* Now isn't the time to do this. P-Princess Charlia is—"

"I just need a moment. Please sit either on the bed or the sofa," I ordered, cutting her off.

"B-Brother Lee Ki-Young? D-Do you have some business with me? I-It's… so… s-sudden. I-If the princess found out about this—a-and I'm not ready yet! Of course, I won't have any choice if you force yourself on me, but… how could a lowly maid like me—I mean! I'm not disappointed or anything! But!" she started stuttering.

I wasn't sure what kind of strange scenes she was imagining, but the perfect individual was actually so close to me from the very beginning.

"You can speak casually when it's just the two of us," I told her.

"*Huh?* What do you mean—" she asked.

"You'll know soon enough, Miss Oscar," I replied.

I saw Aris shaking like a puppy drenched in the rain.

CHAPTER 285
ARIS'S LETTER (1)

[Aris[1] From the Imperial Castle]

[How are you, mother? It's Aris. It's getting cold, and I'm curious about how you are doing since you live far away. Are my siblings doing well in school and is grandmother healthy? I'm worried because I haven't been home in a while.]

[I'm sure you're worried about how your incompetent daughter is doing. Please don't worry about me. I'm doing well, and the first princess has been treating me well as always. She's always complimenting me, saying that I'm a hard-working maid and she sometimes pats my head.]

[Last time, I did something big while taking care of an important guest, so the princess gave me a reward herself. Of course, it was only possible because the other maids helped as well. *Ah*, the reason why I'm sending you a letter after so long is that there's something I need to tell you, Mother.]

[You see… something came up, and I might have to quit this job. Of course, I'm not planning on quitting right away, but thanks to the guest I mentioned earlier, I think I'll be able to leave. I'm not very educated, but after finding out that he desperately wanted me… my heart went weak, and I decided to follow him.]

[I realize there could be a misunderstanding while writing this. I'm not saying that he's trying to take me in as a concubine! Of course, I wouldn't mind it if he wants, but… I'm satisfied just by being at his side right now. *Ah!* I'll continue sending money like always, so don't worry. Anyway… I have a feeling that something important is going to happen and my life is going to change. Although I'm not sure what it'll be just yet… *Ah*, I need to get going. I'll tell you the details later when I get the chance! I'll write again, Mother. Please stay healthy!]

* * *

[Aris From Lindel]

[I'm in Lindel, Mother! Since it's a free city where foreigners live, there are a lot of interesting things here. The guest I told you about last time sent me here himself. I rode a griffon for the first time in my life, and I was really nervous… It's a relief that we arrived safely. The people with him were all nice and great people as well.]

[They are skilled mages and swordsmen, so I couldn't believe that I was actually with them. And I've only heard about dragons through rumors, but I saw one with my own eyes! It was really big, and its majestic form made me weak in the knees.]

[I'm honestly kind of scared. Not of the dragon, but with the situation I'm currently in. It's unusual for a person like me to have their situation suddenly change like this. My long golden hair which was known as the pride of the village was cut short, and for the first time, I equipped myself with a sword even though it doesn't fit me.]

[When I look in the mirror, it feels like I'm seeing someone else. Of course, I was relieved when he told me that I looked good, but it breaks my heart knowing that I won't be able to show my feminine side to him. I'm also nervous that I won't meet his expectations. I'm just curious about what I can do.]

[And… I don't know why, but I get the feeling that one of the mages here doesn't like me. The small dragon dislikes me as well. Even the priest is treating me coldly, so I don't know what I should do. What did I do wrong? I'm used to being hated by others, but I want to get along with them, so I'm really worried. Do you think they dislike me because I'm a commoner? It can't be helped, but I'm kind of sad.]

* * *

[Aris From Castle Rock]

[I arrived at Castle Rock! I met him after a long time as well. I heard many stories and learned many things. I don't quite understand everything he's saying, but I don't think he's wrong. I knew he was an extraordinary person, but who knew he would come up with such an incredible plan? It was to the point that maybe the Benigoa Goddes has sent him to us as an envoy.]

[On the second day, I met Count Castlerock. He told me not to say anything, so I stayed quiet, but when he and the count went into a separate room, I heard them debating loudly.]

[I was kind of worried, but I think Count Castlerock ended up agreeing with what he

said. Lady Marilyn had just gotten involved in a big accident. I think they made some kind of agreement, but I'm sure it's none of my business. It all worked out in the end, so I'm relieved.]

[Based on the rumors, people like Lady Caitlyn and Lady Elise are heading toward Castle Rock. I didn't think much of it, but the more I thought about it, the more I realize that the situation is growing bigger than I thought, so I can't help but be anxious. I have an important speech tomorrow, so I'm feeling even more nervous.]

[I'm going to do my best. Since there are a lot of people working hard for the empire, I have to do my best as well. I'll probably write the next letter from another location. Please stay healthy. I sent a bit more money today. Don't be surprised and don't tell anyone. I didn't do anything bad to earn this money, so don't worry. I'll stop here.]

* * *

[Aris From an Unknown Place]

[Have I told you that I completed my first speech safely? I've been so busy I wasn't sure if I even sent the letter I wrote. Unlike my worry about whether I would do well or not, I have already done four speeches. I was really nervous and worried, but thanks to the people cheering for me passionately, I gained courage, and I think I have slightly gotten used to it.]

[Up until now, I thought I just had to do what he told me to do, but recently, I think my mindset has started changing. Yes, I'm sure it's because he has influenced me. I even think that the way I see the world has widened rather than just my surroundings. To be honest, I haven't seen him since we were in Castle Rock. However, whenever I read the book he gave to me, I feel like I'm always with him.]

[All of this must be the will of the Benigoa Goddess, right? I'm not the only one who changed. First, second, third. As time passes, I get the feeling that the people's cheers for me are growing little by little. Yes, I'm sure everyone is changing.]

[I think today, after a long time, he's going to visit me. From what I heard, he's visiting with Father Basel… He's probably going to talk about something important again, and I wonder if it's okay for me to be with them. I always think that way, but according to him, it wouldn't be strange if I raised my voice. I'll stop here, Mother.]

* * *

[Aris From Celia]

[I had a meeting with the Eight Seats of the Empire. One member was missing, so I guess it's the Seven Seats. Unlike the first time when I couldn't understand anything, I could understand what they were talking about. I'm relieved that my studies are paying off. I thought I still had to study desperately.]

[Since I give a speech every day, I can't be lacking. Of course, I think I'm going to give a speech today, too. I'll be speaking to the foreigners today. I'm worried about whether they'll accept me or not, but since the Seven Seats greeted me with a smile, the foreigners will definitely like me, right?]

[The Mercenary Queen and the shaman welcomed me with open arms. The shaman left after nodding quietly, but I'm still curious about what she meant by her gesture. According to the rumors, she can see the future, so do you think something good will happen to me in the future? I might even become his concubine! It's possible!]

[I remembered while writing this letter, but I heard he's currently discussing his marriage proposal with the first princess. Yes, it's Princess Charlia. I knew she liked him, but I had never imagined that she would make a move like this. The good thing is that I don't think he's really interested in her. That sh#### sh#### ju#### di####, right? The ink spilled. *Hehe*. It's nothing important, so don't worry.]

[*Ah!* Did I tell you in the previous letter that I had a meeting with Father Basel? Thankfully, I think my meeting with him went well. I wasn't really worried since he was close to Father Basel and as expected, Father Basel nodded confidently. He asked me to shake his hand, and he said that he was looking forward to working with me. According to that man, once all these work out, Father Basel could become the pope! Of course, this is a secret, Mother! Keep it a secret no matter what!]

* * *

[Aris From Somewhere Underground]

[Mother, it has been a while since I wrote to you. It has been a short time since I sent you the previous letter, but I have been so busy, and there were some issues as well, so I didn't have time to send you a letter. I sent you a lot of money last time, so I assume you're not experiencing any financial issues. You haven't used all of it, right? You're not the type to do that anyway.]

[There are a lot of things I want to tell you, but I don't have a lot of time, Mother. You just have to know that I'm doing well. I sent you more money today just in case. He gave me the money, so don't be too surprised and please burn all the letters I sent you so far. Don't tell anyone either. Please. You have to burn them all. You must.]

* * *

[I think I know what my task is now, Mother. Following that man nonstop has led me here. Honestly, I'm still dumbfounded. It's hard to understand everything that man is saying, and even though I don't really know what's going on right now, I have this sense of duty to help him, even just a little bit as time goes by. He said that I changed. *Hehe*. Of course, he's still telling me that I'm still the same Aris, and I'm relieved to hear that.]

[Obviously, I have gotten closer to him, and I'm a bit embarrassed to say this, but I kissed him lightly. I'm not sure if he has feelings for me because I'm the one who initiated it, but I still can't forget the look of surprise on his face. I think everything that happened so far has made me stronger.]

[Normally, I would have never done anything like that… *Hehe*. Anyway, he didn't look upset because he patted my shoulder. After that, I think the mage started hating me, but I can no longer hide my feelings.]

[At first, I just liked him a little bit and all I thought was how nice it would be to become his concubine. After all, he's skilled and handsome. However, after spending time with him and while devoting myself to the same goal, my feelings grew to the point that I couldn't handle it any longer.]

[*Ah*, of course, my feeling toward him wasn't the only thing that grew. My feelings toward the empire grew as well. Have I told you that I felt a sense of duty? I can feel it even more than before. I was born as a commoner and lived as a commoner, but there's no such thing as a lowly life in the world. That's what he told me.]

[He said my siblings, me, you, and grandmother are all the same. And that the princess and I were the same human being. I'm sure he has known this for a long time, which is why he respected me, unlike Charlia.]

[Mother…]

[I may have to do something dangerous. Not just me, but my comrades who share the

same goal as me might be in danger, but don't worry too much. Even if I have to throw my life away, I'm going to create an empire where you and my siblings can live happily. He told me that bloodshed is sometimes necessary. I was afraid at first as well, but now, I'm not afraid.]

[I'm ready to abandon everything I have just like how he will shed tears for the people who will have to be sacrificed. I'm not going to make him cry anymore. Never.]

[I'm ready to throw away everything I have. Even if I die, the blood I will shed for the empire will become nourishment for the future.]

[Mother…]

[I'm going to fight. I'm going to fix my incorrect mindset and fight for democracy, for a great cause, and for sacred democracy.]

[Three days later, don't come outside no matter what.]

[Don't do anything and stay at home. My people may be heading there. They'll protect you and my siblings. I'll say it again.]

[Don't come outside after three days no matter what.]

[Oscar From the Imperial Capital]

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1. Aris's POV ☜

CHAPTER 286
A HALF REVOLUTION (1)

'Time flies.'

Actually, when I thought about the things that happened one by one, not a lot of time had passed, but it felt like two years had passed. It was understandable since my surroundings had changed a lot, and I was surely not the only person who felt that way.

'Charlotte.'

I was sure she felt the same way. If I were asked to pick the most important thing in this task, I would definitely choose speed. Moving discreetly was important, but moving fast was more important. I had to get ready to set everything off before the Republic interfered, before the imperial family could respond to it, and before Charlotte was done with her preparations. I was certain she would agree with my thoughts. Even though we hadn't said anything to each other for a long time now, we agreed to move according to what the other person wanted. It was a silent alliance. I wouldn't really say I was sleeping with the enemy, but as she mentioned before, I was currently on her boat.

I rallied the foreigners, the Vatican, and some of the nobles while she rallied the enlightened citizen representatives and the nobles affiliated with her forces. She also started moving the people of the entire continent at the same time. In addition to quickly spreading the ideas written in *Sacred Democracy*, we also officially awakened the desire inside them.

If I were by myself, I wouldn't have been able to get it done this quickly. I thought it would be difficult to educate the citizens, but the moment the foreigners settled on this continent, this idea basically started to spread by then.

Things were happening a lot faster than I had imagined. If she made a move in the east, then I would move in the west, and if she moved in the south, I would move in the opposite direction. The difference was whether it was done moderately or fast. When I thought about that, I was certain she was matching my pace.

I was impressed that Charlotte had borrowed information from *Sacred Democracy* and thanks to her, rallying the citizens had become a lot easier. After the idea took its root, the imperial family started catching up to our movements. They banned the book and started doing a background check on me; however, the issue was that the emperor had put Charlotte in charge. Since she had other plans, there was no way I would get caught. Of course, there was a time when I had to hide, but the prelude to the revolution had already begun by then.

Many secret organizations that Charlotte and I didn't intentionally create were created, and to educate all the citizens, they worked on their own.

To become the pope, Father Basel decided to side with the citizens, and some of the nobles close to me supported my plan as well. It was difficult to convince nobles that I couldn't but think of abandoning them if they were ever dissatisfied with my plans. However, Count Castlerock and Lady Caitlyn were both tired of the imperial family, so in the end, they decided to support me.

'Even after the revolution ends, our power will remain.'

The sacred democracy would not diminish their powers, and the same was true for the nobles, the foreigners, the members of the bourgeoisie rank, and us. I actually offered them even more power, and they agreed. The real democracy Charlotte wanted was dangerous, and they shook their heads at it; however, they realized the number of benefits they would receive.

Meanwhile, Oscar, who was chosen as the next leader of the empire, started working hard. The woman, who was being called a symbol of the empire by some groups, was one of the people who could actually feel the flow of time. I thought she was living a busier life than Charlotte. I was sure it wasn't easy for her to go from a lowly maid to the symbol of democracy. It was undeniable that she was working harder than anyone else here, and the fact that she was still following my orders was great.

I didn't have high expectations when I chose Aris, but surprisingly, she agreed with my conditions.

When I looked out the window, I saw her blankly looking up at the sky. She had short hair with a sword at her waist. She could only learn the basics of swordsmanship, but she learned it satisfactorily within a short period of time. As such, I believed that her talent was also thanks to her efforts.

When I quietly called out her name, she quickly turned her head and honestly, her expression and face were still the same. However, the air around her and the emotions in her eyes were proof that my plan was going smoothly.

“Miss Oscar.”

“*Ah*… Brother Lee Ki-Young. You agreed to call me Aris when it’s just us two,” Aris reminded me.

“*Haha*, you’re right. I must’ve forgotten since we have big plans ahead of us,” I told her.

“Don’t worry too much, Brother Lee Ki-Young. Everything will work out, and I’m going to do my best so that your plan bears fruit,” she assured me.

“*Haha*, I appreciate the kind words. And… thank you for enduring such a heavy burden,” I thanked her.

“No, you don’t have to thank me. I was surprised when you called for me back then, but right now, I’m happy. I can feel a sense of duty in the work I’m doing right now. Really,” she explained.

“I’m grateful that you think that way,” I said.

“I should be the one thanking you,” she said.

“Miss Aris, wait… Lady Aris…”

“No, no! I like it more when you call me Miss Aris,” she interrupted.

“But—”

“No, please. When it’s just us two, please call me that. If you start calling me Oscar as well, I feel like… it’ll be… kind of confusing,” she requested.

“I understand. If you insist…” I agreed.

“Have you eaten yet? I’ll quickly prepare—”

“No, I’m fine. I just came over to see how you were doing, Miss Aris,” I told her.

“Then, I’ll at least serve you tea!” she offered.

Being served tea by the symbol of the empire’s democracy wasn’t so bad, which was why I couldn’t hate Aris. Since she had obtained various skills while serving under Charlia, it didn’t take long for her to serve a fragrant tea. Just one sip was enough to wash away my exhaustion.

“Does it taste okay?” Aris asked.

“Of course, Miss Aris. By the way, you keep looking outside…” I pointed out.

“I’m worried about my mother and siblings,” she answered.

“The Blue Guild members are already protecting them, so you don’t have to worry too much. Even if something happens to me, I’ll make sure your family is protected,” I assured her.

“Please don’t say something like that. I don’t want you to get hurt. Now then… is it time to head out?” she asked.

“Yes. Shall we, Miss Oscar?”

“We shall, Brother Lee Ki-Young.”

‘She’s cute.’

The way she bit her lips was cute, but her expression slowly turned serious. She had to be having mixed feelings since this was her last speech.

‘It was probably hard for her… ’

However, I was sure it was worth it.

Seeing the serious Oscar made me feel like I was looking at a different person, and it gave me goosebumps for some reason.

When I opened the door, the first thing I saw was a nervous Max and Jung Ha-Yan. Since I had been explaining to them every day just how important all these were, I was certain they were nervous as well. Jung Ha-Yan definitely disliked Aris because she puffed her cheeks while looking at us. Of course, there weren't any women Jung

Ha-Yan liked, but since I had been recently spending a lot of time with Aris, she was feeling increasingly depressed.

'I need to take care of her.'

Since she had been working hard and was holding it in, I made a decision to comfort her once all this was over.

When I waved lightly, she smiled brightly. The Museum Manager Max must have thought I was waving to him because he started jumping while waving his arms. When I gave the signal asking if it was ready, he drew a circle with his arm.

I also saw Sun Hee-Young, Kim Ye-Ri, and Hwang Jung-Yeon. Aside from Jo Hye-Jin, whom Kim Hyun-Sung had summoned, they were people I hadn't seen for quite a while now. The rookie members who had left to go protect Aris's family were here, which meant all the members of the Blue Guild had gathered here. Of course, the fighter for democracy Barkdeku along with Arkimo were waiting among the citizens as well.

That was when Miss Aris; no, Oscar, walked up to the podium.

'It's starting.'

Seeing that she was talking without looking at the speech I had prepared for her, she had to have memorized all of it. When I looked at her, I was reminded of Charlia, who hadn't worked as hard as her.

'She's way better and more competent.'

I wanted to focus until the end of her speech, but I had other tasks to handle, so I headed toward Jung Ha-Yan and Max. Lee Ji-Hye spoke as I walked and I could hear her despite the cheers of the citizens and Oscar.

"It's starting."

"Yeah, basically…" I agreed.

"I've been dying to know all this time, and I can finally see it now. I was really curious whether Charlotte would be able to calm the citizens down or not, as that's the most important part," she continued.

“If she can handle the final blow I had planned, I’m going to call Charlotte a goddess,” I said.

“So you’re saying you’re that confident? It’s not that I don’t understand what you’re thinking, but… realistically, the possibility of it happening is low. Historically, there have been cases of honorable or bloodless revolution…” she confessed.

“Didn’t it happen before in England?” I asked.

“*Ah*, you’re talking about James II who was exiled to a foreign country. However, he didn’t achieve democratization. It’s meaningful because the bill of rights got introduced, but I’m sure they were still some bloodshed. I don’t know if Charlotte is aware of this, but if she’s using that as an example, then I guess you can say we’re in the same situation. In addition to corruption and incompetence, there’s also a mix of self-righteous imperialism and religious issues… the citizens are dissatisfied as well,” she explained.

“I don’t know much about world history…” I commented.

“You don’t need to because it’s obvious. Even though a lot had changed, their plan was to control the citizens who rose up in rebellion and release the troops they had been hiding so that they can enter with the people and oppress the emperor. The only difference in England’s bloodless revolution was that there were outside forces, but nothing else is really different. They did shed blood, but it was a minimal amount. It was a good plan, actually, better than good. Personally, I don’t think Charlotte is an idiot. I actually admire her,” she added.

“I never imagined you’d say something like that. I’m surprised, noona,” I commented.

“Historical philosophers, innovators, and idealists are like her. This is a bit different, but do you really think the people who introduced communism to the world or chose a national system made those choices because they’re stupid? It’s not just them. The majority of political idealists are geniuses,” she continued.

“You’re right, noona,” I agreed.

“The issue is the reason why they fail,” she said.

“I think I know what that reason is…” I started.

“What do you think it is?” she asked.

“It’s just my personal opinion,” I mentioned.

“It’s even better,” she commented.

“They believe that others will follow their ideals,” I said.

I was no longer interested in Charlotte’s thoughts, but it was kind of heartbreaking to know that Charlotte fully trusted the people and the members of her faction. I was sure that a few members in her faction didn’t agree with her ideals, but the path that this boat would take was more important than her internal affairs. Up until now, she had been the one steering the boat, but from now on, I would be steering it.

Our Oscar was giving her speech with excitement, so I thought the timing was perfect.

“Ha-Yan, Max. Display the video,” I ordered.

We shouldn’t keep this exciting video to ourselves.

The magic hologram was so big I could see it from outside the window. The people in the capital would be able to see it as well. I was certain the surprised citizens had the same expression as Oscar. Lee Ji-Hye stared at the sight blankly. She then looked at the screen in front of her and then turned to the hologram Max had prepared. She looked stupefied.

“W-What’s that?”

“It’s the next video we’re going to display,” I replied.

“I already know that. What I’m asking is… the content,” Lee Ji-Hye clarified.

“It’s a list of the nobles who had visited the black market I’m operating and a collection of their acts,” I answered.

“Y-You’re crazy. Oppa… this is really…” she paused.

“*Hahahaha*.”

“I-I think this is a bit too much. This is… too…” she stuttered.

“What? You still think this is too much?” I asked.

“No… it’s great. Honestly… I’m wet,” she replied.

I wasn’t sure where she was wet, but her voice was quivering.

Obviously, I smiled at that. I was certain that it wouldn’t take long for the nobles, who had to be looking at the hologram with blank expressions, to explode in fury. Those with vested interests would have the same thought upon watching the video.

CHAPTER 287
A HALF REVOLUTION (2)

- My dear comrades who share the same ideals as me. I believe it's my first time introducing myself like this. There are people who have met me and who know me indirectly, so I'll formally introduce myself. My name is Oscar. I'm the author of *Sacred Democracy,* and although I'm lacking, I'm the head of the civil revolution and an ordinary citizen just like all of you.

* * *

"Excuse me… Princess Charlotte."

"I'm watching, too. What I'm seeing right now…" Charlotte paused.

"I-I believe that's prepared by Brother Lee Ki-Young's party."

"Is it illusionary magic?" she asked.

"I don't think it is, Princess. It's impossible even for an archmage to cast an illusionary magic that big. I knew he was preparing something, but this is…"

"…"

"…"

"It's a video."

"What?" she asked.

"It's a video created from magic. I once heard that something like that existed in the city where the foreigners lived. Yes, I'm certain of it. I'm sure that's what it is."

"When… did…"

"I don't have time to explain the details. However, I'm certain that there's a place

where they're transmitting that video from."

"You mean like a source?" she questioned.

"That's right. Aren't you a mage, Count? Can't you feel the flow of magic somewhere?"

"I-I apologize. It seems like someone has interfered with the wave of magic within the capital, so my skills aren't enough…"

"We have to stop it. We can't let them see it no matter what! There will be bloodshed. Count! We have to hurry up and stop it. No matter what. *Ahh*… but how—"

"It's… t-too late. There's no way to fix it…"

* * *

- You don't need to be surprised. Dear comrades, what you're seeing now isn't illusionary magic. It's a gift from the Benigoa Goddess. She thinks of all mankind as equals, and this is a way to bring my dear comrades together. It's the goddess' mirror, which will show us the things we couldn't see, and it's a blessing.

* * *

"Brother Lee Ki-Young… where… where is he?" the emperor muttered.

"I-I heard he returned to Lindel today, Your Majesty. He had some business he had to take care of…"

"W-What in the world… If there's someone who can explain what's going on right now, bring them to me. It can be anyone…" he ordered.

"It's Oscar, Your Majesty. The person you are seeing there is Oscar."

"I already knew that. I'm asking about how their face is being displayed in the sky, you idiot! What are the imperial mages doing? Someone stop it right now!" he yelled.

"Your Majesty, p-please calm down. The imperial mages are trying to figure out a way right now."

“Oh god… oh god…”

* * *

- My dear comrades. I’d like for you to see it with your own eyes, decide, and make your own move. You must see for yourself the current state of the Holy Empire and the true colors of the nobles, who call themselves honorable while looking down on us by saying that our blood is inferior. You have to see just how spiteful they are! What I’m about to show you can be pretty shocking and cruel, but this is their true selves and how they live their lives. Please don’t look away and watch closely. I want you to take a closer look at the kind of place we have been living in.

* * *

“Nice.”

It was Aris who commented calmly. I knew she would do well, but she was even calmer than I thought while she stood at the forefront of all this. She was calming down the people who had gotten surprised by the sudden appearance of the hologram.

The majority of the foreigners were very surprised by the new technology presented by Max and Jung Ha-Yan. Aris’s comment about this being the goddess’ gift had to have been effective because it didn’t take long for the citizens to find their composure.

We didn’t add any comments on the screen Oscar was standing in. After introducing herself and asking them to work with her, she urged the people to watch the video that was about to play. It was the right decision because when watching a video like this, comments were unnecessary. After all, what they were about to witness was devastating and powerful enough.

When Oscar’s face disappeared, the faces of the corrupted nobles were displayed. The situation was getting so funny you had to have popcorn to enjoy it.

Baron Heian, the iron-fisted ruler of the small town of Vine…

Duke Kariv from the metropolis, Batican and was said to have a friendly image…

Count Bush, who had been receiving a lot of complaints regarding the high taxes…

There were many more nobles who were VIPs of the black market.

"*Hahahahaha*."

It was a list I knew would become useful one day, and it was the most effective to reveal it at a place like this. Fear, curiosity, then anger. As time went on, I could already imagine them getting angry. Even the hands and feet of those in our faction were shaking. It would be strange if they didn't get angry while watching the scene unfold.

- *Kyaaaaaah!! Ahhhhh!!!*

- *Ahhhhh!* Please… please!

The black market below Castle Rock would have to be closed, but I had many ways to make money, and once this was over, the majority of the people within the empire would be wiped out, so the demand would decrease. I also thought it would be best to start a new business with other countries.

To be honest, not all the nobles were like that, and even though the video was slightly edited and exaggerated, the public didn't need to know that. After all, the majority of the people would end up believing what they were seeing with their own eyes anyway.

- *Hahaha*… I think this is helping me relieve my stress, Duke.

- Didn't I tell you not to call me that here, Count?

- *Ah,* I'm sorry. I…

- *Haha*, it's fine. I was just joking, so no need to drop your head like that. I think I was a bit sensitive. You were right. It's truly relieving me of my stress. Since I do important work for the empire, it's important to clear my head like this once in a while. This place isn't like before, but I'm glad this kind of place exists.

- It's the same thing for me, Duke. It's been kind of boring recently, so I prepared a

separate space in my land. Duke, you should… Actually, it might be difficult for you since people look up to you.

- There's nothing good about being admired by those beasts… *tsk*. This is all because of my son. If I could, I would have been like Count Bush and… *Ah!* I'm curious about something… Are the taxes in Count Bush's land…

- Yes, it's pretty high, but there's really no other option. The other lands are accepting foreigners left and right. To be honest, I don't want to accept them into my land. They may be strong, but they have the blood of lowly commoners. There's nothing about them that I like. Even His Majesty wasn't even sure about whether to give them a title or not, so isn't that already a humiliation for them? If we don't want to fall behind the other lands, we have no choice but to squeeze it out of the citizens. *Hahaha*. What about you, Duke?

- I believe we're going to open our land soon. I don't really like them either, but there are a few that I do like. That #### is pretty impressive compared to the other foreigners. They're very well-mannered.

- *Ahhh*, I've heard of ####. I've heard the rumors about them. I've isolated myself from them, but after hearing your compliment, I should set up a meeting with them.

Obviously, Brother Lee Ki-Young was edited out of the video.

- But you know, if you raise the taxes like that, won't the citizens…

- *Hahaha*. Of course, they'll make a petition asking me to reconsider; however, I can simply ignore it. They're nothing but beasts, Duke. If you simply ignore them or beat them up, they'll remain quiet.

It was ridiculous how he made a comment you would only hear from a drama. Even if someone wrote a script, I was sure it wouldn't be as good as what he was saying. This was a good example of what the corrupted nobles usually thought about the citizens.

- If they resist…

- Then you just need to beat them harder. You see, those beasts are like weeds, so if you don't pull out the roots, they'll keep growing, Duke. When beating them, you must do it properly. We need to keep reminding them of the difference in classes, and

if we treat them like livestock, they'll remain quiet. *Hahaha*. What do you think, Duke? If you're interested…

- I'll visit when I get the chance.

- If you do visit, I'll make sure to give you the best treatment. *Hahaha*.

I was sure the comrades currently gathered here were getting angry as they were watching this. And I was certain that the more they watched, the angrier they looked.

However, that wasn't the only video I had prepared. I thought it would be better to go all out once I got started, so I had to show everyone in the empire. Showing the nobles eating piles of delicacies with bellies as big as mountains was the foundation of the video. The video I wanted to show the starving citizens was like a tragic independent film.

Nobles who liked to ridicule children and women…

- P-Please stop. I beg you.

Nobles who liked to kill innocent people without mercy…

- Please spare me. Please spare me. Please…

Pieces of shit who liked doing dirty things to girls who could be their granddaughter…

Poor citizens and scholars being discriminated against and oppressed…

A child soldier mobilized to hunt monsters and their tragic end.

I didn't forget to include every level of the classes.

Even those who looked down and made remarks to foreigners, as well as those who complained and verbally abused the Vatican were included. The foreigners and Father Basel may move out of necessity rather than anger, but the more motivated the people were, the better. The magic hologram that appeared like a panorama was enough to charm their souls. Surprisingly, the entire capital instantly became quiet.

That was when Lee Ji-Hye approached me and muttered…

“Oppa, is this really being transmitted to everyone in the empire?”

“Yeah, from each guild, to be exact. Our comrades in other regions are watching this with us… Miss Oscar will shoot the signal, so we have to move simultaneously,” I answered.

“You’re right, oppa,” she said.

“About what?” I asked.

“Do you see the atmosphere right now? If Charlotte can still calm them down, I’m going to call her a goddess. Really. A bloodless revolution is impossible now. If Charlotte is watching this right now, I’m sure she’s not happy,” she replied.

While I was talking to Lee Ji-Hye, the video was about to end, and the face on the screen was First Princess Charlia's face. The crazy woman’s rampant behavior could be seen on the screen as if she were a leading actress in a blockbuster movie. There were so many scenes that the editing process was grueling. In addition to the scenes of her slapping her maids, she also insulted them. And the way she decorated herself with luxury goods made her look like a villainess. This part had my favorite scene and line. When I looked up again with high expectations, I saw her saying a famous line with a twisted look.

- The citizens don’t have bread to eat? *Haha*. If they don’t have bread, then they can eat cake. Why even worry about that?

Lee Ji-Hye asked another question as if she found the scene ridiculous.

“Did she really say something like that?”

“Of course I fabricated it, noona,” I replied.

That was why it was effective. After all, that kind of fabrication was a method even history had acknowledged.

CHAPTER 288
A HALF REVOLUTION (3)

“It’s taking them a lot longer than I thought.” Lee Ji-Hye pointed out.

“It’s because they don’t know how to rebel. Even though they’re scared and angry, they don’t know how to initiate it,” I replied.

“I understand that, but you must feel kind of disappointed,” she said.

“There’s nothing I can do about it, and I’m not that disappointed. I somewhat expected it and even if they joined a different force, do you really think these citizens who have been caged all this time will be able to jump out of their nests on their own? Once the signal is shot, they’ll probably start charging. Just look at their faces. I guarantee that saying, *‘Let’s fight together!*’ would end everything,” I explained.

“The process of planting the idea in their heads was kind of hasty. Well, I already knew. I just said it out of disappointment. So, should we shoot it now?” she asked.

I had to think about it, and even though no one was saying it, the citizens were about to explode in fury. Charlia’s famous line was enough, but since this scene would go down in history, it had to look fancier. For example, the uprightness of a democratic fighter. It was a part of my plan, but Oscar’s image was too valuable to use as a signal.

“Let’s wait since she hasn’t finished her speech yet,” I suggested.

Actually, I was waiting for Charlotte.

The timing wasn’t so bad. This was a great time for her to calm the people down and march together on the streets. The enlightened nobles supporting Charlotte’s cause would probably stay with her, but I was sure they would think, *‘will I be able to maintain my power?’* after watching the video. To make things worse, some nobles in her faction appeared in the video, so at this point, I was certain that she was trying to comfort those people. I could also imagine a conflict between those who thought that controlling the anger of the people was impossible and those who thought that they still had to do their jobs.

‘I moved pretty hastily.’

So, she was in a hurry as well. And both sides were experiencing the repercussions of such actions.

That was when I nodded toward Lee Ji-Hye.

“All citizens should not fall for the traitor's sweet words and protect their place!”

I heard an amplified voice from the imperial castle, and when I waved my hand to signal her to withdraw from the plan, Lee Ji-Hye gave a sign saying that she understood.

‘Nice.’

This kind of battle of words wasn’t so bad. I thought Charlotte was going to respond to it first, but a representative of the imperial castle spoke first. I thought it would have been better if the emperor himself came out since this was important, but there was no way a coward like him would show himself in a situation like this. The dying old man was probably looking for Charlotte or me.

The knights appeared along with a loud voice in case of an unexpected fight, and the mages were trying to find ways to stop the magic hologram. It was amusing to see the archers shoot their arrows toward the hologram. Seeing that their response happened so fast, they had to have felt like they were in danger. They knew that something big would happen if they didn't calm the people down.

‘He’s not that incompetent.’

The dispatched knight tried to send the people back to their homes, but what was laid bare couldn’t be hidden, and they had to be forcefully sending them back because I started hearing screams. The behavior of those in power was the same as those on Earth, and I couldn’t help but laugh when I discovered that.

“I’ll say it once more. All citizens should not fall for the traitor’s sweet words and protect their place! Everything is a lie and has been fabricated with magic. People of the empire, what you see isn’t a blessing from the Benigoa Goddess, but the whisper of the devil. Oscar is a traitor to the empire! The same goes for those who support her belief and follow her. She’s the devil devouring the Holy Empire!” the voice yelled again.

'I should start responding… '

Before I could even give her the signal, Aris spoke angrily and loudly for the first time.

- You guys are the ones devouring the empire! You dirty imperial family. It's because of all of you that this empire is sinking. Look up to the sky. The dead and the dying citizens are aware of your evil deeds, and the goddess is aware as well.

"How dare you speak of the goddess with that dirty mouth of yours, you traitor!"

- You're the traitors. You guys are the ones who disobeyed the goddess' will that all creation under the goddess are equals! You guys are the traitors for creating the division of classes and separating noble blood from commoner blood. Think back to when you became the imperial family and witnessed the things those of so-called noble blood have done.

Unlike my concern that she might run out of things to say, Oscar was arguing by saying things she wanted to say. Naturally, Lee Ji-Hye started talking.

"That's not scripted, right?"

"It's not. She probably thought of it on the fly," I answered.

"She's more useful than Charlia," she commented.

I had the same thought. I didn't think she would be surprised, but Oscar had taken the lead and was denying the emperor's power. Obviously, I found this scene amazing

- The empire only exists because of its people.

"The empire only exists because of His Majesty, you traitor! Look at yourself right now. You're being agitated without showing your true face. People of the empire, Oscar is the devil trying to put all of you in danger. She may be saying sweet words, but she's a witch who will push you off a cliff. Regardless of the reason and title, you'll be given a title and a prize for capturing that witch, and it can be anyone. The witch has to be executed—she has to be!"

- I'm not hiding, you traitor of the goddess!

Aris had been looking directly at Jung Ha-Yan while the latter was transmitting the video, but she suddenly turned her back, and I saw her trying to walk out of the door.

'Huh?'

I was kind of surprised, but it wasn't bad. That act wasn't in the script, but showing herself in front of the citizens was a good idea as well. I quickly signaled Jung Ha-Yan. It was time for Oscar to show herself to the world, so it wouldn't be a bad idea to allow the citizens to see her location.

"Brother Lee Ki-Young."

"You can do as you please, Miss Oscar," I told her.

"Okay…"

To maintain the atmosphere, she raised a flag that had the *Sacred Democracy* logo on it, which had now become a symbol, and showed herself to the people. She was on top of a clock tower where she could see the entire capital. The way Aris raised the flag while standing there was enough to be recorded on a page of a history book. The citizens turned to the clock tower after recognizing the familiar landmark displayed in the magic hologram. The uplifting atmosphere was increasing, and I wanted to scream.

'It's perfect.'

With this kind of production, a sacrifice for a signal wasn't necessary anymore.

"I don't hide."

- I don't hide.

The goddess' mirror echoed the words Aris was saying, and the people who thought that this was an illusion magic became confident. The soldiers immediately ran toward the clock tower, and the soldiers we had stationed there stopped them. There were loud voices everywhere and the fire they prepared beforehand started flying one by one. Magic and arrows started falling, but we obviously blocked them using the defense magic we had prepared ahead of time. I thought Aris would get scared, but she continued talking during all these and the image she displayed as a fighter for democracy was even better than what I had imagined.

- I don't hide. Traitors of the Goddess. I'm not standing here to push the people off a cliff. I'm going to stand in front of all of them. Where is the emperor hiding?! I want the one who criticized me for hiding to speak. Where the hell is the emperor in this situation?!

'She has awakened!'

This was a great example of what it meant to speak out. I guarantee that this was the most glorious moment of her life.

- Where's the princess who decorated herself with the blood and sweat of the people? Where are the people who claimed that they had divine blood? I don't want to hear your voice, you dog of the imperial family! I want to hear the voices of those who created this faulty system and are drinking the sweet wine behind it.

"I-I'm Charlotte, the Second Princess! Your desire will come true!"

Charlotte had to have run out in a hurry because she started yelling without the voice amplification magic. I wanted to play along with her, but it was too late. I didn't want to ruin this historical moment.

"Ha-Yan, increase the volume on our side and if Charlotte's party uses voice amplification magic, block it all. You too, Mr. Cheon Kwan-Wi," I ordered.

"Okay, oppa!" Jung Ha-Yan answered.

Charlotte's voice was subsequently buried underneath various noises, so no one paid any attention to her. Moreover, there was fire flying everywhere, so the knights ran out and tried to push her back inside. Charlotte loved her people more than anyone else, so she tried to push the knights away. However, how could her loyal subjects leave her alone in a dangerous situation like this? They knew very well that the situation was bad.

Instead of Charlotte's voice, Oscar's pleasant voice filled the capital as she maintained her momentum.

- People of the empire! They're the ones hiding behind the castle walls because they're afraid of getting hurt. This is the true color of those dogs with power who have been looking down on us for having commoner's blood and have been telling us that they'll protect us with their power and authority. Like it was reflected in the

goddess' mirror, they're not interested in ruling the empire and leading us on the right path. All they want to do is seize power to fill their own bellies. Excluding the awakened nobles like Count Castlerock, Lady Caitlyn, Lady Elise, and those who have signed the Citizen's Revolution Support Declaration, all the other nobles in this land are like cancer in our society.

I liked how she was doing what I wanted her to do, and revealing the names of her sponsors was a natural thing to do. The apprehension of those connected to me had to have been quenched by now as they nodded away.

I saw Oscar glancing over at me. It felt like she was asking if she could start it now, so I had no choice but to speak quietly.

If Charlia were like her from the start, then I wouldn't have been forced to do such a tedious task like this.

In the end, Oscar delivered the words I said to her.

"You must rise."

Aris raised the flag, and as she unsheathed her sword, she released her inner voice.

- You must rise!

"We must build an empire for the people of the empire."

- We must build an empire for the people of the empire!

"My comrades."

- My dear comrades!

"I'll take the lead."

- I'll take the lead before anyone else.

"I'll shed my blood first."

- I'll shed my blood first before you shed yours. I'll shed my blood for the cause and for you.

“Wake up.”

- Wake up!

“Many people will support us.”

- Many people will support us. The Vatican is aware of the goddess’ true will, and they are sincerely praying for the empire. The nobles supporting us, as well as the foreigners who are like a family to us now—they will all be with you!

“Fight.”

- Stand up! Take up your weapon! You must take back your rights! My dear people of the empire. It’s time to fight! We must fight.

“End…”

- For the sacred democracy! Stand up and fight! My comrades!

The loud cheers throughout the capital, no, throughout the empire, started filling my ears.

CHAPTER 289
A HALF REVOLUTION (4)

The flames of revolution rose up. The foreigners and soldiers hiding underground came aboveground, and fire magic started flying everywhere. The Citizen Revolutionary Group gave weapons to the citizens, and they jumped into the fire like moths to a flame. When many people gathered, fear would disappear, and madness would spread.

The revolution began in the imperial capital as well as in each of the cities, excluding the lands our sponsors ruled over. They could see this happening in real time through the magic hologram. It wasn't strange for the citizens of other cities to grab their swords and run out into the streets while screaming.

"Ha-Yan, what's the situation like?" I asked.

"T-The other cities are in a similar situation. It's going according to your plan, oppa!" she replied.

I smiled happily as I looked at the magic hologram Max was managing. The crowd that was more excited than the people at the capital was yelling, and when I looked at the screen displaying the situation live, I started to get goosebumps. I couldn't help but regret not including a comment functionality in the magic hologram.

'The mid-sized city, Georgina, is under the rule of Count Bush who openly made the beast comment.'

The foreigners dispatched there were from the Garosh and Cash Clan. I knew that Galoshik, the guy wielding a large axe, was pretty skilled, but he fought better than I had imagined. He was also skilled in instigating, so I thought about meeting him later.

- We're not beasts!

- *Aaaahhh!*

- We'll be the owner of the empire!

- Rise! My comrades! Fight and revolutionize!

- We're not beasts! We'll be… the owner of the empire!

I guarantee that no other place was as passionate about the revolution as Georgina. After all, people tend to react more violently the longer they had been oppressed.

When I quietly looked over at Batican, I saw a pretty good scene over there as well. Lim Ri-Dan, the demon hunter of the almost large guild, Illidari Guild, was leading the people there. Thanks to her job, green energy could be seen seeping out of her eyes, and she looked like she would be a nice ally to have.

- My dear comrades. We must seize our own destiny. We can't keep running!

- *Aaahhh!*

- Reinforcements from Castle Rock have arrived. The blood we shed today is not meaningless blood. It's for the land where we'll live for the empire! Many of our comrades have started the uprising in the capital. Victory will soon be ours! Everyone, let's fight! We're all ready. They're the ones who aren't ready!

'She's not bad either.'

Aside from them, the revolution started in the other lands in their own way. It felt like the weight of power was leaning to one side in regions where the revolution was doing well. For the regions with borders to the Republic, I thought it would be best to take care of them quickly, so I dispatched foreigners and honorable nobles there, and it seemed to have been effective. The eastern region belonged to Count Castlerock, Lady Caitlyn, and Lady Elise. Since powerful people were on my side, it obviously didn't take long to deal with everything. There were regions that seemed to be struggling, but it was none of my concern since I was in a safe place.

'I'm sure Father Basel has already started replacing people… '

Since members of the Vatican, including Sister Helena of the Heresy Inquisitors and Sister Jessica, were involved, I was sure the change of government would be successful. Besides Father Basel, another cardinal was supporting Father Basel, and since two out of the three templars were with us, I was even happier. If Father Basel

became the pope, I may become an honorary cardinal, which made my heart flutter.

'I'm sure Hyun-Sung is doing well, too.'

It was too early for the Republic to start moving. Internally, I wasn't sure what people thought about the situation, but it would take three days for their soldiers to reach this place.

'I'm sure the revolution will be over by then.'

There was no need to kill the soldiers under the nobles. After all, we only needed the heads of some of the nobles. The soldiers who refused to draw their swords at the commoners after being affected by what was shown on the hologram were ready to betray the nobles who were paying them. And even Charlotte's soldiers had no choice but to follow me, as they didn't want to sacrifice the people, so the revolution had already succeeded halfway. I was definitely feeling it now, but people like me had the desire to pour fuel on burning wood. As such, it didn't seem bad to display another video.

"Ha-Yan, get ready for Ahn Ki-Mo," I ordered.

"What? Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"We're going to film a video right now and display it right away. I think we need a noble sacrifice scene… and I think I need Arkimo, the fighter for democracy, to play that role," I replied.

"*Ahh*, got it! Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo! Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo! O-Oppa is calling for you," she shouted.

A noble sacrifice was required in a revolution like this. Ahn Ki-Mo of Lindel, who had been dreaming of becoming an actor since he was on Earth, had to have heard of what he was about to do because he looked at me nervously. This was his debut, and it would spread all over the continent. Originally, I wasn't planning on sacrificing him, but I thought it would be better to do this. If I showed a scene that was too realistic, it might scare some of the people.

The sacrifice had to be noble and touching, like a death in a movie. It could not be horrible and distressing. After all, who would want to see someone covered in their own blood as their guts spilled onto the ground?

“Please let me know when you’re ready, Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo,” I requested.

“Okay, Sub Guild Master. How should I… move…” he mumbled.

“It’s a scene where you’ll get hit by the arrows shot by the soldiers wearing imperial armor. The arrows will be fake, so no need to worry. If possible, I’d like a scene showing the fighter for democracy, Arkimo, sacrificing himself to protect a girl fighting in the revolution. *Ah*. Ye-Ri! Come here,” I called her.

“I said. I’m not going to do things like this. I want to go outside like Mr. Deok-Gu. You said Oscar needed to be protected,” Kim Ye-Ri said.

“This will be the last time. You did well last time, so I’m sure you’ll do well this time. I want the two of you to disguise yourselves with magic, and I’ll give the signal in ten minutes. I’m only going to show one scene, so don’t feel too burdened by it,” I explained.

“Okay, Sub Guild Master.”

“I… really don’t want to do it…” Kim Ye-Ri mumbled.

“This will be the last time. I promise,” I told her.

“This is really the last time,” she repeated.

“Yeah. Go get ready. Don’t use too much ad-lib. Ji-Hye noona will explain the script,” I said.

“Okay…”

It was one professional and one amateur, but it didn’t take long for them to get ready. A few of the Blue Guild staff members appeared with bitter looks while wearing imperial armor, and Ahn Ki-Mo and Kim Ye-Ri nodded to signal that they were ready. Even though she said that she didn’t want to do it, Kim Ye-Ri looked excited.

‘That kid should be more honest… ’

As soon as I gave them the signal, their realistic acting began. Kim Ye-Ri was walking with heavy footsteps while carrying the flag of the Citizen Revolutionary Group that was bigger than her body. The yearning for the revolution in her eyes couldn’t be

hidden. Her expression was so overwhelming that it gave me goosebumps. Unlike her awkward acting during the Park Deok-Gu incident, she was in character this time.

'Did she practice or something?'

I couldn't really imagine Kim Ye-Ri practicing her acting while standing in front of a mirror, but if that weren't the case, then she had to be a natural actress. When she gulped, she started shouting.

"For sacred democracy! Fight! Revolutionize! Let's all fight together and break free!"

The way she ran while holding the flag made her look like a fighter for democracy. The extras who joined swung their swords, and they were showing a great scene despite the small space. The soldier holding an arrow aimed his cruel, dirty arrow toward the girl yearning for democracy, and a fire burned in Arkimo's eyes—the fighter for democracy.

Kyaah!

Seeing Arkimo contemplate made it more immersive. Arkimo, who had become the symbol of revolution along with Barkdeku, was contemplating whether to protect the cause or the girl.

"Die! You dirty traitor!"

One of the Blue Guild's staff members spoke an ad-lib without realizing it, but it wasn't bad. The moment the dirty arrow of filthy vested interests started flying, our hero—Arkimo—stepped in front of the girl.

"*Kugh!*"

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh!

Several arrows landed on Ahn Ki-Mo and the way his body moved looked pretty cool. He neither screamed in pain nor cried for help. Blood started to spill from the areas where the arrows landed. Arkimo's eyes were starting to close, and the little girl was looking at him blankly.

"*Ah!*"

The hologram showed Arkimo again, and for some reason, the next arrow didn't come flying. It was strange, but who would think about that in a scene like this? They would probably think that a foreigner had appeared out of nowhere and killed them.

"*Aaahhh!*"

"It's fine… it'll be… fine."

Kim Ye-Ri cried urgently while Arkimo didn't let go of his desire for democratization. The way he forced himself up with arrows on his body made the scene look even more melodramatic, but in a world like this, this kind of scene was effective.

"I must stand. My comrades are… fighting together," Arkimo said weakly.

"*Ah*… I-I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I…" Kim Ye-Ri stuttered.

"Children… do not need to fight," he told her.

At this point, my hands and feet were curling up in cringe, but since the public would see this as a real event, it was tolerable.

Arkimo staggered, unable to maintain his balance. As he dragged his body and picked up his weapon, he collapsed.

"The blood that I shed… was for the people… proud…" he mumbled.

"With a burning thirst… with a burning thirst… sacred democracy… *hurrah.*"

And he closed his eyes in style. Tears filled Kim Ye-Ri's eyes, but she wiped away her tears and grabbed the weapon the fighter for democracy was holding. It was a really cringey moment, but once it was edited, it should transform into a tolerable scene. With a flag in one hand and a sword in the other, Kim Ye-Ri shouted while looking at the imperial castle.

"Cut!" I shouted.

"…"

"…"

“I’m. Really not doing this anymore,” Kim Ye-Ri said.

“Actress Kim! How are you so good at acting? It was really perfect. You were really cool, Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo. Transmit this immediately, Max,” I ordered.

“Okay!”

“And if there are scenes you think are awkward, insert some noise in that scene, got it?” I told him.

“Got it!”

Kim Ye-Ri, who strangely looked happy, and Ahn Ki-Mo, who just made a successful debut, removed their disguises and prepared to help the foreigners again. During all this, the video was edited, transmitted, and it became fuel poured into burning wood.

“*Aaaahhhh!*”

“*Hurrah! Hurrah!* For sacred democracy!”

“Don’t let Arkimo’s sacrifice go to waste! Let’s raise our flags and stand up, my comrades!”

There were people trying to head to the imperial castle while others were trying to stop them. When I saw Oscar fighting with the citizens under Barkdeku’s protection, I automatically nodded. It was getting pretty stagnant. However, the appearance of trustworthy support in a time like this was enough for it to be written down in history.

“Let’s get ready to head out,” I said.

The time to backstab the emperor and Charlia was nigh.

CHAPTER 290
A HALF REVOLUTION (5)

There was fire everywhere, and many people were screaming. I[1] had no choice but to fix the helmet hindering my sight while biting my lips. Not only was I breathing hard, but I started cursing.

"Shit. Shit…"

"Fire! Fire! They're not people of the empire but traitors who have been possessed by the witch. Don't stop firing your arrows! Don't let them enter the imperial castle no matter what! Don't show them mercy! Don't let them come in!"

'Traitor. They're traitors.'

Despite telling myself that this was my job, I found it hard to pull back the bowstrings of my bow, and I was sure I wasn't the only one who felt this way. My comrade next to me couldn't pull his bowstrings either. All we could do was shoot it toward the sky while praying that it wouldn't land on anyone.

'Shit! Shit! Shit!'

"Don't look at the sky! It's the whisper of the devil. They're lying about it being the blessing of the goddess! That's not the goddess' mirror! Everything Oscar is saying is a lie! You must not fall for her words. Don't believe anything she's saying! Only His Majesty is right! Do not be surprised! Do not be shocked!"

The commander was shouting with all his might, but even he looked nervous. He was telling us to remain calm, but that message might have been for himself. He probably felt that something was off.

'Whisper of the devil, my ass!'

If that were really the whisper of the devil, like the imperial castle was claiming, the Heresy Inquisitors would have already been there by now to face those people. Moreover, some of the priests were even working with the citizens. In addition to

foreign priests, there were even priests who often prayed at the Vatican with them, so it was difficult to understand what was going on.

Nothing was officially announced, but I was certain that the Vatican had come to the conclusion that the citizens weren't wrong. If the pope or the other cardinals checked the goddess' mirror in front of them, they would have recognized who was good and who was evil.

'They're not lying… '

As someone who was born and once lived on the land ruled by Count Bush, I knew better than anyone what was going on. The citizens there were starving while the nobles were busy filling their bellies. I had to live every day worrying about whether I would make it through the day or not. I also had to pray to the Benigoa Goddess every night that nothing bad would happen. Why was our life so miserable? All I could think about was if the Benigoa Goddess truly existed, why was she not looking after us?

'They're right.''

The issue wasn't with the goddess. The nobles and the imperial family who had committed treason against the goddess were at fault.

'All are equal under the goddess.'

The Benigoa Goddess wouldn't have separated the significant from the insignificant, to begin with. The goddess's mirror was a holy book of enlightenment and a weapon given to the people by the goddess. It was a device bestowed upon us to enlighten and awaken the people still in the dark, and that thought remained in my head. The nobles not only considered the people as beasts, but they only considered you human if you had your own territory. And the imperial family was using the citizens' tax money to enjoy a life of luxury.

'Eat cake if you don't have bread? Who would… say such a crazy thing?'

"It doesn't even make sense…"

There were still tens of thousands of people on the outskirts in the north and west who couldn't even eat porridge, let alone bread. Before coming to the capital, I thought that cake was something that only appeared in fairy tales and even with my

wage, it was considered a luxury food, so I had to be fully prepared to buy it.

The imperial family said they always thought about the people and the citizens, but they weren't interested in how we lived at all. If you looked at how the nobles, the imperial family, and those with vested interests in this empire were living, it would be obvious. The Second Princess Charlotte was known for her integrity, as she wasn't living a life of luxury, but from a commoner's point of view, the amount of money she used to maintain her dignity was unimaginable. I guarantee that if the imperial family's safe was unlocked, tens of thousands of people could live without starving for a long time.

"You must stand up! Stand up together! This empire does not belong to the emperor. It belongs to the Benigoa Goddess and the citizens!"

"Let's follow Miss Oscar!"

"For the sacred democracy!"

Oscar leading the people while holding a flag was different from the rumors I had heard about her. She looked as strong as the Goddess of Freedom with her golden hair shining brightly thanks to the priests' blessing and holy magic, and she looked righteous.

When I unknowingly looked up at the sky, I started seeing new people through the goddess' mirror and what I saw was a little girl who couldn't even properly hold up a large flag. If I had married early and had a child, my daughter could have been her age.

When I lifted my head again with mixed feelings, I saw imperial soldiers wearing the same armor as me. As they smiled wickedly, they pulled back their bows and aimed them toward the girl calling out the goddess' name, which caused me to scream without realizing it.

"N-No!"

'Are they shooting children now?!'

I was an imperial soldier, but why would they shoot an arrow at a girl like her? I bit my lips hard, and my hands started shaking. I wasn't sure if I should feel relieved, but thanks to a man who stood in front of her, she was saved. However, the man struck

by the arrow stumbled and fell to the ground. Seeing him close his eyes slowly made me feel frustrated.

- With a burning thirst. With a burning thirst… sacred democracy… *hurrah.*

What was right and wrong?

'Shit.'

What was I doing here? The citizens were fighting. Moreover, the nobles with vested interests were reciting the Citizen's Revolution Support Declaration, and the foreigners who had nothing to do with the empire became one under the goddess' will and were wielding holy swords in her name. Why did I have to shoot arrows at them instead of holding my sword next to them? Why did I have to protect our tormentors and oppressors? I couldn't understand any of it.

"Don't think about anything else."

"Sir…"

"I'm saying this for you, Mike. Don't think about anything else. We were just unlucky. We just happened to be standing on the opposite of them. If we turn our backs now, we'll get stabbed by the knights behind us before we could join them. It's not just you. There are at least a thousand of us who want to get out of this place," my senior explained.

"So why…"

"That's just our life, Mike. We're just being dragged around by the wind and waves… That's our life. I'm not shooting these arrows because I want to," he replied.

"The goddess will punish us, sir. We won't be at peace even after we die," I said.

"No, the goddess will forgive us. Yes, I'm certain of it. She'll pat our backs saying that there wasn't anything else we could have done," he disagreed.

"But…"

"…"

"…"

Craaaaack!

Booooooooom!

'Don't stop! Don't stop shooting!"

"You are citizens as well. Let's rise together and fight! Your swords shouldn't be pointing at your fellow citizens! Soldiers and knights of the imperial castle. Let's rise and fight together!" Oscar yelled.

"*Aaahhh!* Prepare the defense magic!"

"Don't listen to the enemy's words! Only think about protecting His Majesty. Only him!"

"Where is your emperor?! What are you fighting for?! Soldiers of the empire!" Oscar continued.

"It's the witch! Oscar is the witch! Cover your ears, soldiers of the empire! If you haven't forgotten the oath you had taken to become the emperor's sword, shoot those arrows! Save those possessed by the witch!"

"Priest! Call for a priest!"

"We! Are not raising our swords toward you! Lower your weapons! Lower them and fight with the will of the goddess in your heart!" Oscar shouted.

"Protect His Majesty!"

"I'll protect all of you! I'll be with you!" she added.

I started hearing a mix of voices, and during all this, I could hear explosions everywhere as well as screams. As the commander instructed, I just wanted to cover my ears.

'Yeah, there was nothing else I could have done.'

I had sworn to the goddess to fight for the emperor, and I couldn't break that oath. As

my senior said, even if I died here, the goddess would understand. She would understand and tell me that I had done well while patting my back.

My mouth twisted and my hands quivered even more. And that was when I heard an unexpected voice.

“The emperor is leaving the imperial castle!”

‘What?’

“It’s the emperor and Princess Charlia! They’re leaving the castle!”

‘W-What… ’

When I looked up at the sky again, I saw them being reflected in the goddess’ mirror. It was ridiculous how they were leaving through the back of the castle while being surrounded by knights. And that wasn’t all. Some of the nobles in the castle did the same as well. They had been hiding in the safest location, but now, they were leaving the place where a battle was about to break out.

“Those wicked bastards! You dirty bastards! And you’re telling us that you can rule the empire?!” I yelled.

That was the person I had pledged my loyalty to, and that was the behavior of the man who reigned as the absolute ruler of this large empire. Naturally, my eyes were filled with anger, and that was when I unknowingly aimed my arrow at the emperor reflected in the goddess’ mirror.

Tap.

The arrow struck something before weakly falling to the ground.

“*Uh*…”

“What’s… that…”

I saw a large shadow covering the capital. The goddess’ mirror I had been looking at was now being covered by this large something. The creature that covered the sun for a moment and plunged this place into darkness was overwhelming. I couldn’t understand how a creature with such a large body could fly in the sky.

"*Ahh… Ah…*"

Of course, I knew what it was. It was a creature in the stories passed down through generations.

"It… it really existed," I mumbled.

The other soldiers around me also looked at the sky with blank expressions as they started mumbling.

Craaaaack! Craaaaaaaaaack!!

After passing the soldiers, its large claws pierced the imperial castle. Broken pieces of the castle started falling to the ground, but the large creature started looking around as if the top of the imperial castle was its nest.

Roaaaaaaaar!

Its loud roar was enough to make my skin vibrate, and the earth trembled in its wake; however, the noisy howling that filled the place soon disappeared.

'A dragon.'

The reason why a creature like that was here was obvious. It was all because of the foreigner the dragon had chosen. He was one of the Eight Seats and was an honorary bishop as well. Looking at the dragon alone made me feel a shiver down my spine and on top of its head, a tiny human could be seen mumbling something while holding onto the dragon's horns.

"Where do you think you're going, Your Majesty?"

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1. Imperial Soldier Mike's POV ☜

CHAPTER 291
A HALF REVOLUTION (6)

"Where are you going in such a hurry, Your Majesty?" I asked.

'Nice.'

It was a really funny situation, so I unknowingly smiled. I actually wanted to applaud the emperor and the nobles.

'They were running away.'

Even though I somewhat expected it, I told myself that I had to reward Jung Ha-Yan for catching up with the empire's faction. Even in history, the first ones to escape were those with power when their country was in danger. Not many people could face the end with composure and stay with their people until the end. Obviously, that slow-witted emperor and the nobles who often held those sleazy parties would never make such a beautiful decision.

'But I do understand why… '

The leader of a group had to be safe—I agree with that. However, it was their responsibility to handle their people's reactions. The soldiers looked discouraged when they saw the emperor through the goddess' mirror. They no longer trusted him.

'The timing isn't so bad.'

Seeing them drop their weapons one by one while blankly looking at Dialugia was the best reaction. To be honest, dragons weren't invincible. Back then, we fought her while we were injured, but the people of Castle Rock still managed to corner Dialugia until she was on the brink of death. To be exact, thanks to the villain that kept her child hostage, the people could treat her like a sandbag, so I guess it could be considered a victory. Magic spells and swords imbued with magic could pierce through a dragon's tough leather, and even though they were highly resistant to injuries, dragons had limited endurance and stamina. However, her strength didn't

really matter, as her value and the symbolism she brought was more important. Even though she was doing what I was telling her to do, she had to be doubtful of my words because I heard her talking to me telepathically.

[We're in the middle of the enemy line… Is this really okay?]

'Of course. If I wanted to actually fight them, I would've told you to just shoot Breath from afar instead of coming all the way here. Our mages will protect us from small attacks. There's no reason to step on these humans, so all you need to do is pose and roar.'

[I don't feel good about this. I feel like I've become a spectacle…]

'That's not true, Dialugia. It's more like they're in awe of you. That's why all you need to do is use as much mana as you can and roar one more time. If you can also use Fear, please use it as well.'

[You have to keep your promise.]

'Of course… '

She wasn't just a random dragon that appeared out of nowhere, so when Dialugia roared with all her might…

"*Roooooooooooar!*"

The soldiers were disoriented upon hearing her roar. Despite letting the Citizen Revolutionary Group know ahead of time, the roar affected them as well. Of course, the citizens and soldiers weren't the only ones looking this way. The emperor was also looking with his eyes widened.

The funny part was that the old man's face was filled with a ray of hope and he probably thought I was his savior or something. I was certain he wanted Dialugia and me to take care of this riot. He still had no idea that I had already backstabbed him, so it became clear why the empire was in such a mess.

"*Oooh,* Brother Lee Ki-Young! You're here. Y-You're finally here!" the emperor shouted.

"…"

“I knew you would come. As someone loyal to me, I knew you were coming. Kill all those traitors right now… *R-right now!*” he ordered.

“…”

“F-Foolish traitors. *H-Haha*. That must be a dragon. You’re trustworthy, Brother Lee Ki-Young. Indeed. Very trustworthy,” he added.

“…”

It wasn’t just the emperor. The nobles with him were cheering me on passionately as if they were middle-aged fans of an idol. Even though she wasn’t yelling, Charlia was looking at me as if she was Juliet looking at Romeo. It was ridiculous, but there was no need to talk to her.

“Brother Lee Ki-Young! *Hahahaha!* I knew you would come! Please kill those dirty traitors this instant!”

“Brother Lee Ki-Young! Brother Lee Ki-Young! We have been waiting for you!”

“Hurry! Kill them! Brother Lee Ki-Young! We must drive them out this instant!”

The foreigners were participants in this revolution. I had no idea why they thought I was on their side, but I was sure that was what they wanted to believe. If I were in their position, I also wouldn’t want to think that the dragon roaring in the middle of the castle was my enemy. Naturally, I wanted to destroy their happiness.

After a moment of silence, I started talking…

“It seems like there has been a misunderstanding, everyone. I’m not your ally. *Haha*.”

“*Huh*?”

“I’m also a member of the Citizen Revolutionary Group and a follower of Miss Oscar, Your Majesty,” I added.

The look of disbelief on the emperor’s face was amusing.

“N-No need to joke around… Brother Lee Ki-Young. *Ha*… *Haha*… I must’ve done something to… disappoint you, Brother Lee Ki-Young. O-Okay! What was the

problem? Y-You must've been dissatisfied when I offered the northern territory to you, right? Yes… it's my fault. If there's land you want, tell me. I-If I can give it to you, I'll give you everything, Brother Lee Ki-Young!" the emperor stuttered.

"*Hahaha*. That's not what I want, Your Majesty," I told him.

"T-Then, what do you want? I-I'll grant whatever you want," he offered.

"Even if you don't grant it to me, I'll get what I want, Your Majesty," I said.

The emperor frowned. I guess he trusted me more than I thought and although I felt kind of bad for making him feel betrayed, it was ironic how I felt good about it.

After taking a deep breath, I spoke loudly. Jung Ha-Yan used her voice amplification magic, and my voice filled the capital again. The goddess' mirror was reflecting Dialugia and me, so I was sure everyone in the empire could see us.

"Soldiers of the empire and the knights of the emperor! Look at them!"

"B-Brother Lee Ki-Young…" the emperor called out weakly.

"Look directly at the emperor all of you are trying to protect! That's the true nature of the former empire and the ones in power you were willing to protect, even if it costs your own life. These people only care about their safety and lives, so they're using you as a scapegoat by sending you to the battlefield! Do you really believe that man is fit to rule the empire?!" I continued.

"What are you—Brother Lee Ki-Young!" the emperor exclaimed.

"The empire doesn't need people who prey upon the citizens and only care about their comfort. The empire needs someone who'll take the lead to fight with all of you!" I added.

The camera turned to Oscar at the right time. She had to have rolled on the ground, as she was covered in dirt, and there was blood dripping from her broken armor. The way sweat covered Oscar's face was exactly the image of the leader I had just described.

When I signaled again, Jung Ha-Yan's camera turned toward the emperor. Unlike Oscar, he was trembling in fear. I was sure the majority of the people fighting for the

emperor had this thought.

'I can't believe he's the one I pledged my loyalty to… '

They would definitely realize it now…

"Throw away your weapons, soldiers of the empire! Throw them away and join us! You're also citizens of the empire, and you're worthy to be with us. The goddess' mirror is reflecting us. You must decide whose side you're going to be on. Everything is the will of the Benigoa Goddess. The goddess will be with you. Brother Lee Ki-Young will be with you! Father Basel, the many priests, and the Holy Knights will also be with us! Will you stand with those with dirty powers or will you embrace the sacred democracy and join the glorious shrine of the goddess?!" Oscar shouted.

Naturally, I glanced over at Sun Hee-Young, and she started sprinkling her holy magic. The priests on our side and even the foreigners started sprinkling their holy magic, which created a spectacular sight.

"The goddess has spoken. All humans are equal under the goddess, and we have forgotten that message all this time until now. We're sinners, but we can be forgiven. It's our fault that we have sinned. If we drive out those traitors who betrayed the Goddess of Benigoa's teaching, we can ask the goddess for forgiveness. It's not too late, everyone! Please join the shrine! Don't oppose the goddess! Become her sword!" she added.

I felt regretful that hymns couldn't be sung and a prayer session couldn't be held because I knew they would be effective. The Citizen Revolutionary Group emitted a brilliant light thanks to the holy power surrounding them. The soldiers of the empire trembled while trying to hide. One by one, the soldiers started throwing away their weapons and removing their armor. And the priests on our side started changing their formation.

"I-I'll also join you!"

"I'll also hold up my sword while standing on the goddess' side."

The commander and some of the knights were yelling, but the tide had already turned.

'It's a nice view.'

I had seen many situations where the tides had turned, but the sight I was looking at was on a bigger scale. 99.9 percent of the citizens were believers in the Benigoa Goddess, so mixing religion and ideology was just the right thing to do.

“Obtaining the heads of those dirty people and returning the sacred democracy to the citizens of the empire is the only way we can repent for our sins! Everyone! We can’t let Arkimo’s sacrifice be in vain! Let’s all go together!” Oscar shouted.

“B-Brother Lee Ki-Youuuuuung! Where are you, Charlotte? Charlotte! H-Hurry… those! *Kgh*… *Gaaah!*”

The emperor’s quiet voice always annoyed me, so hearing him shout was a sight to see. I saw him quivering while grabbing the back of his neck, and his legs had to have started shaking as well because he collapsed to the ground.

Charlia looked to be in disbelief as she tried her best to show her face while trying to push the nobles away. She was thinking that even if I abandoned the emperor, I wouldn’t abandon her.

“T-This can’t be happening. It can’t be. There’s no way Brother Lee Ki-Young will abandon me! Brother Lee Ki-Young! I’m here as well! It’s me, Charlia! It’s Charlia, the one you whispered words of love to! We promised to be together!” Charlia yelled.

I couldn’t remember whispering words of love to her.

She probably thought her words would reach me, but the goddess’ mirror wasn’t displaying them. Instead, the scene depicted in the mirror consisted of Oscar and me. And this was why the media was scary.

The citizens and the Citizen Revolutionary Group were worked up.

More than half of the soldiers protecting the door to the castle had changed sides, and the Citizen Revolutionary Group was already invading the castle. I expected the nobles inside to shed blood, but of course, Dialugia and I weren't going to do anything because everything would take care of itself.

When I suddenly thought about how it would be good to capture the emperor now, I unknowingly looked down. I saw that Charlia was still calling out for me desperately.

‘Tsk.’

I wasn't going to say anything to the emperor because he looked like he was on the verge of fainting, but I felt like I had to tell him the ugly truth.

"Princess Charlotte is also supporting the Citizen Revolutionary Group!"

It was a pretty shocking statement, but I thought it was kind of unfair that I was the only target of their resentment. Of course, it was also a way to protect Charlotte, who was hiding somewhere.

The citizens were shouting while the emperor and Charlia had frowns on their faces.

"*Kghhh!*"

The emperor started throwing a fit as if he was having a seizure, and Charlia was screaming.

"Charlotte! Charlotte! You were behind it! It was you. You! You!"

As part of the audience, it was a type of family drama I didn't want to miss.

'Tsk, tsk. I've never seen a family this broken… '

CHAPTER 292
A HALF REVOLUTION (7)

Of course, I accept the fact that I had some part in the creation of this broken family, but there was no reason to find the cause. To be honest, the situation was being taken care of, so it had nothing to do with me anymore. The imperial family was destroyed, and even if this revolution ended up being a half-measured one, the fallen imperial family still wouldn't be able to stage a comeback.

'They don't have a chance… '

Basically, the revolution's failure was unlikely. I expected the fight over power to last a long time, but seeing those with power getting worked up was enough to change the hearts of the citizens in unexpected places. If I were a soldier of the empire, I would have had a change of heart as well. All they had left was a few knights truly loyal to the empire and some soldiers who couldn't choose to be on the goddess' side.

I was kind of worried about what Victor Hart of the imperial knights would do, but seeing that I didn't hear any other news, Cha Hee-Ra noona had to have handled it. Based on the situation, I thought that maybe it wasn't necessary to send Cha Hee-Ra noona out.

'That old man won't pick this time, too.'

I was sure he was confused about who he was protecting, and I couldn't imagine him swinging his sword at the large group of citizens the emperor had labeled traitors, but at the same time, I couldn't imagine him swinging at the emperor. He was strong, so I couldn't understand why he was scared of swinging his sword.

'Is he smart or dumb?'

I had no idea what the others thought about him, but from my standards, Victor Hart was the dumbest of them all.

Screams continued to reverberate below the castle.

“Find the traitors of the goddess! Find them! Search the entire castle! I’m sure they’re hiding somewhere!”

“The maids are innocent! The goddess won’t forgive those who hurt the innocent. Just like how we repented for our sins, they can join us!”

“You crazy traitors! Get down on your knees! O-On your knees, now! You’re nothing but low and dirty commoners! How dare you lay your hands on me!”

“Please spare me. Please… It’s my fault. Please spare me!”

“Don’t let any of them live! What are the Heresy Inquisitors doing?! Reveal the truth that the traitors are working with the devil!”

“Drag all of them out!”

Different voices were mixed together, and it felt like I was watching a group of crazed or possessed people.

Oscar was still leading the people, and while they were protecting the innocent people in the castle, they started looking for the nobles in hiding. During all these, the Heresy Inquisitors were dispatched, so Father Basel’s work within the Vatican had to have gone well. The citizens were blocking the back of the capital and were closing in, so the emperor and Charlia could already be considered captives. The goddess’ mirror was still reflecting the images of those who had committed many sins, so it shouldn’t be long until they were caught.

I thought about shooting Breath just once, but it was unfortunate how I couldn’t do such a thing.

“*Hahahahaha!*”

Basically, the situation was amusing, and I noticed Jung Ha-Yan staring at me while I was laughing. When I nodded lightly, she walked away happily. I wasn’t sure what she was up to, but she was probably heading toward the first princess to release her pent-up anger caused by what the first princess had said earlier about how we loved each other.

‘We won… ’

When I got off Dialugia, I saw a familiar face.

“Father Basel!” I called out.

“Brother Lee Ki-Young,” Father Basel greeted.

“How did it go? Did everything work out?” I asked.

“Of course, and it’s all thanks to you! Everything worked out! It does break my heart a bit, but it’s the goddess’ new will, so what can you do? All of this is for the goddess as well, so I’m sure she’ll be pleased,” he replied.

“Yes, you’re right. The goddess will smile and nod at us, Father Basel. *Hahaha*. By the way, since everything worked out, I should be calling you Your Holiness, not Father Basel. I’m jealous, sir. You’re a little bit closer to the goddess now. *Hahaha*,” I commented.

“We haven’t even done the ceremony yet! *Hahaha*. Although, it’ll probably end up that way… In that case, you’re now an Honorary Cardinal,” he said.

“What? What… do you…” I mumbled.

“*Hahaha*. You don’t need to look so surprised, Honorary Cardinal,” he laughed.

“Father Basel… I-it’s so sudden…” I commented.

“I was actually already thinking about it ever since we talked about it. The Vatican hasn’t made it official yet, but as the next Pope, it’s what I want to do, so who will dare go against me? *Haha*. To be honest, I wanted to appoint you as a cardinal within the Church of Benigoa instead of an Honorary Cardinal, but the rules are pretty strict, and you seem like you don’t like being pressured that much, so this is all I can do,” he explained.

“*Ah*… Father Basel… I’m not worthy of the position,” I told him.

“You are definitely worthy of the position, Brother Lee Ki-Young! I also trust you the most!” he revealed.

“I’m just serving the goddess, Father Basel,” I said.

“That’s the reason why I like you so much. *Hahaha.* You’re not greedy! How can a person not have any greed? *Hahaha.* A foreigner like you—I mean, a person like you is rare! You’re definitely a blessing from the goddess!” he complimented.

“I-I’m flattered, Your Holiness.”

“*Hahaha.* No need to call me that, Brother Lee Ki-Young. You can call me that after the ceremony. *Hahaha*. *Ah!* Even though you’re just an honorary cardinal, I’ll make sure you receive the same benefits a cardinal receives, so you don’t feel too disappointed,” he added.

‘Nice! Nice!’

I honestly wanted to scream in joy. On the outside, I was waving my hands while telling him that it wasn’t necessary, but who would decline this kind of offer?

‘I’m an Honorary Cardinal.’

In addition to the various privileges, the three Templars would ensure my safety. Out of the secret weapons the Holy Empire was hiding, one of them would become my shadow warrior, and these benefits were enough to make me want to start dancing.

“I appreciate the offer, Father Basel. By the way, where’s Sister Jessica and Sister Helena…” I asked.

“*Ah!* Sister Jessica has just entered the castle, and she’s helping the people realize the will of the goddess. Sister Helena is still at the Vatican punishing the sinners… I should actually be staying at my station, but when I saw you appear with the dragon, I ran over here as fast as possible. *Hahaha!* It’s my first time seeing a real dragon, and being selected by a transcendental creature is really…” he paused.

“Everything is the will of the goddess. *Hahaha*. There’s no other reason,” I responded.

I thought the situation ended pretty fast, but it seemed like the Vatican still had a lot of work to do, and since Helena was taking care of it, he probably thought he could come out without any worries.

The citizens were still capturing the castle, and I was sure their situation was different from mine. I wanted to have a cup of tea, but even I was worried about what others would think about me if I drank tea in this situation. I saw people

approaching while being surrounded by soldiers. When I focused mana on my eyes, I saw the noble supporters of the Citizen Revolutionary Group from our faction. Some released sighs of relief while others approached with smiles. They were already certain of our victory.

“Lady Caitlyn! Lady Elise!” I called out.

“Brother Lee Ki-Young! *Ah!* You’re here as well, Father Basel,” Lady Caitlyn greeted.

“*Oooh*, it has been a while, Lady Caitlyn,” Father Basel greeted back.

“You look great, Father Basel,” she complimented.

“*Hahaha*. Thanks to the enlightened citizens, today is the day when we can start teaching the goddess’ new will, so of course, I’m happy. By the way, didn’t you say you came here to speak with Brother Lee Ki-Young? I’ll take my leave,” he said.

“No, it’s fine, Father Basel. As you said, it’s a great day so we should let everyone see that we’re together. I’m not just here to thank Brother Lee Ki-Young, so if you leave, I’ll feel really bad. Please stay with us,” she requested, and Father Basel nodded.

The imperial family and the Vatican were no longer fighting over power. It was a new era, so there was no need to threaten each other anymore. The nobles, including Lady Caitlyn, Father Basel, and the Vatican knew that better than anyone else. I nodded and continued talking as well. I was adding a bit more joy to the already happy atmosphere. It was kind of scummy to start celebrating our victory when the Citizen Revolutionary Group was still fighting hard, but I wasn’t going to deny it. It had secretly been confirmed that the people here would be the next ones in power.

“*Hahaha.* Please Lady Caitlyn… there’s no need to thank me. I should actually be the one thanking you,” I told her.

“No need to thank me, Brother Lee Ki-Young. Us, nobles of the east, actually—we’re not nobles anymore. Anyway, if you didn’t take care of us, we wouldn’t have been able to stand in the goddess’ shrine. We’ll never forget what you have done for us, and I would like to apologize for the trouble we caused back then, Brother Lee Ki-Young. It was a very serious and sensitive situation,” she explained.

“I completely understand, Lady Caitlyn. I should be the one thanking you for trusting me. If it weren’t for the nobles of the east, the situation wouldn’t have worked out

this well," I said.

"We're just happy that we could share the same goal as the citizens. However…" she paused.

"*Hahaha.* Don't worry, Lady Caitlyn. I'll make sure to hold a separate assembly for the nobles who supported the Citizen's Revolution Support Declaration. No, rather than me holding it, the citizens will hold one for you. *Haha*," I said.

"Thank you for taking care of us."

"I would like to thank you again as well, Brother Lee Ki-Young," Lady Elise said.

"You don't need to do that, Lady Elise. You're embarrassing me. *Hahaha*," I told her.

This situation was different from what was going on in the castle.

"*Kyaaaaah!*"

"*Ahhhhh!*"

"It hurts… it hurts! Save me! Please save me!"

"Don't let any of them escape! We can't let any of the traitors of the goddess escape!"

"Don't let the sacrifice of Arkimo, the fighter of democracy, be in vain!"

"For the sacred democracy! For the goddess!"

The situation before us was different from ours, as we were talking in a comfortable atmosphere. And the fact that I was part of this group made me want to scream in joy. I felt kind of bad, but that was how society worked.

"How about we move somewhere else?" I suggested.

"Where…?"

"*Hahaha*. We have to finish this up, Lady Caitlyn! Father Basel, please join us. It's the glorious victory of the people of the empire. As the cardinal, you shouldn't miss out on a day like this," I requested.

“Oh my…”

“Yes, come with us, Father Basel. You should greet the denizens since you’re going to become the pope, Your Holiness,” Lady Caitlyn suggested.

“*Ahem.* Let’s do that. Since the great soldiers of the goddess have won, I must congratulate them!” Father Basel agreed.

When we were about to change locations, another group appeared. Seeing them frown made me laugh. Naturally, I started clapping, and when the others saw me clap, the nobles of the east instinctively started clapping as well.

“*Hahaha.* You’re the biggest contributor to this revolution, Princess Charlotte! *Hahahaha.* And I would also like to thank the nobles who supported the revolutionary group! Princess Charlotte, no, no—you’re no longer part of the imperial family. Miss Charlotte!” I called out.

“Y-You…”

“Now, now. Come with us! It’s the glorious victory of the citizens!” I told her.

When I brazenly gave her a thumbs-up for her work, I saw her fists quiver.

CHAPTER 293
A HALF REVOLUTION (8)

Charlotte's thoughts were obvious. She had to be cursing me, or she thought I was being cheeky. Charlotte looked as if she wanted to say something, but she closed her mouth when she saw Father Basel and Lady Caitlyn's approach. Actually, she could only come out of her hiding place because of me. If it weren't for me, she would have had to hide in fear that she would get swept in this fire

"*Hahaha.* I didn't know that. Miss Charlotte must've contributed the most in this revolution."

"You've been very helpful, Your Highness."

She was worthy of receiving a thumbs up because I guarantee that if I worked on this alone, the revolution wouldn't have been completed this quickly. When I spoke cautiously, their eyes landed on me again.

"I haven't told you this, but she's worthy of being called the number one contributor of this revolution. She helped spread the sacred democracy, and she didn't hesitate to support us both physically and mentally! Despite being the biggest contributor, she said she would give up everything for the citizens. How nice would it be if the other imperial members were like Miss Charlotte? If they had been like her, the citizens wouldn't have rallied."

"…"

"*Hahaha.* Don't you agree, Miss Charlotte? She must be at a loss for words because she's touched. It's understandable since the revolution you have been dreaming about is about to come true. *Ah!* It's the same for the nobles following you, Princess. Now, please come this way! Even though you weren't there during the Citizen's Revolution Support Declaration, all the citizens will know that you support the cause," I continued.

Some of the nobles quietly looked around. Lady Caitlyn and Lady Elise were also talking to the other nobles while holding their hands and the nervous nobles left

Charlotte and approached me. They had already realized who was the popular one.

'It's natural… '

The nobles who agreed with Charlotte's will stayed by her side, but those who cared about the numbers or their personal gain were already changing sides. Charlotte kept moving her lips as if there was something she wanted to say, but she couldn't complain in a happy atmosphere like this. She was probably worried about the nobles behind her more than herself. She understood that I just had to say one thing, and both she and the nobles would be condemned by the citizens.

"*Hahaha.* You can smile a little. We shed a little bit of blood, but the people won, Miss Charlotte." I pointed out.

I wasn't trying to provoke her, but she had to have disliked the way I was talking because her fist started quivering again. It was amusing how she grabbed my hand tightly when I offered a handshake.

'Man that hurts… '

It was funny because the handshake felt like it was expressing her feelings.

"*Hahaha.* I didn't know you had a connection with Miss Charlotte, Brother Lee Ki-Young…" Father Basel commented.

"We're not really close, Father Basel. We managed to build a relationship because we had the same goal. Miss Charlotte is very considerate of the goddess as well," I replied.

"I know that very well! Miss Charlotte has made a big decision. I'm sure it wasn't an easy one, though…" he said.

"It's proof that she's very considerate of the citizens and the goddess. *Haha*. Now, this way. I'll escort you. We may run into an angry citizen, so it'll be safer if you stay with me, Miss Charlotte," I advised.

"…"

"You don't have to thank me, Princess. Compared to what you did for me, this isn't even considered as being considerate," I added.

Naturally, I was very satisfied by the fact that Charlotte couldn't say a word. She looked as if she wanted to punch my smiling face, but right now, she wasn't in a position where she could do that. She was probably thinking about my intentions. To be exact, she was suspicious about why I was letting her live. Even though we had been working together up until now, Charlotte and I had different turning points in this revolution. From my point of view, Charlotte was no longer necessary to me, and since she had no idea that Kim Hyun-Sung had made *that* request to me, she was probably busy thinking about why she was spared.

'That's right. Why do you think I'm letting you live?'

However, no matter how much she thought about it, all she could think about was what had to be done after the revolution. Of course, it wasn't just her who could do what had to be done after the revolution, the others could do so as well.

'Maybe not… '

The majority of the nobles died, so we needed someone who could quickly fix the chaotic situation. We had Oscar and the executives of the Citizen Revolutionary Group, but just a few days ago, they didn't even know anything about getting work done, so there was no way they could properly handle a country.

'The nobles in Charlotte's party have to move together as well.'

That was the right thing to do…

'Good thing I let her live… '

It was Kim Hyun-Sung's request to keep Charlotte alive, but at this point, I started thinking that it was the right decision. Since we could create a situation where the imperial family would return the sovereignty to the people, keeping Charlotte alive was a game-changer.

As I was having different thoughts, screams could still be heard everywhere, and the majority of them probably belonged to the enemy. I wasn't really interested, but the noises had to be painful to Charlotte.

"*Ah*, look at the goddess' mirror! It seems like the evil emperor and the materialistic first princess were finally captured by the goddess' followers. *Tsk, tsk.* He lacks determination. How could the emperor leave those protecting him and run away?

Tsk. Don't you agree, Lady Caitlyn?" Father Basel asked.

"You're right. The imperial family only cared about themselves from the beginning. *Ah*, please don't misunderstand. I don't think that way about you, Miss Charlotte," Lady Caitlyn replied.

I saw the group deal with the emperor and his faction. Seeing that Charlia looked fine, Jung Ha-Yan had to have gotten to her late, but the way Charlia kept screaming was still the same.

- Charlotte… Charlotte, you dirty bitch! It's all your fault! All of it!

-…

- Let go of me! I'm the princess of the empire! How dare you… how dare you?!

-…

- I ordered you to let go!

Obviously, the nobles of the east coldly looked at the mirror. They were still thinking about the time when Charlia had thrown hot tea at Lady Marilyn.

'They're pretty scary, too.'

I was relieved that we were on the same side. Anyway, the video showed Charlia screaming, but the sound of the people shouting became louder. Seeing those with power being dragged by the revolutionary group was a spectacular sight, and it was obvious that the Citizen Revolutionary Group had won this game. It would be strange not to shout after seeing that. The remaining powerful nobles were quickly handled, and more and more people threw away their weapons and surrendered.

"It's the victory of the people!"

"It's our victory! The victory of the Citizen Revolutionary Group!"

"The Goddess of Benigoa will bless us!"

While people were cheering everywhere…

“That bitch!”

“We must kill those dirty traitors who betrayed the goddess this instant!”

“Kill them! Kill them!”

There were others filled with madness and bloodlust. Some shed tears because of the emotional victory, and others prayed to the goddess. Just about anyone would find this situation interesting.

The goddess’ mirror showed Oscar’s side again, and she still looked dignified. Since she had been selected as the next leader, promoting her was a necessity rather than a choice. The way she led the revolutionary group with scars all over her body and while holding up the sacred democracy flag made her look beautiful.

‘Man… I picked the right person for this role.’

Originally, I thought that using her as a sacrifice would be a good idea, but she ended up being the ideal leader of the empire.

Oscar immediately spoke while staring straight at the camera.

- Surrender! People of the empire who are still resisting for the sake of these dirty people by standing against the Goddess of Benigoa, throw away your weapons! Shedding more blood is useless. The citizens have won.

People started cheering, and they were so loud.

- That’s right. The people of the empire and the Citizen Revolutionary Group have won!

‘Nice, nice!’

- This victory was only possible because of the blood you have shed. It’s the goddess’ victory!

‘Very nice!’

- However, we couldn’t have achieved this victory with our powers alone.

'Yes, yes, of course.'

- The foreigners, the Eight Seats of the Empire at the heart of those foreigners, and some of the nobles who supported the Citizen Revolutionary Group are worthy of sharing this victory with us.

'That's right!'

- Father Basel of the Vatican and Miss Charlotte who made a big decision for the empire are the main contributors to today's victory.

'Good job, my Aris!'

- The people who have been with the Citizen Revolutionary Group from beginning to end are worthy of being here with us!

'Keep going… '

Naturally, I thought it was time to start walking up and obviously, I felt proud that I was in the same position as the others. The members of the Citizen Revolutionary Group started calling out our names and Oscar's appropriate encouragement and support paid off.

"Father, it's time…"

"*Ahh*, I think we can walk up together. *Oh*, before doing that, you should slightly rip your clothes and put some dirt on them since a lot of people will be watching. We must show them that we fought with them. The public will cheer when they see that," I suggested.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young is right. It'll seem kind of strange if only our clothes look clean."

"Now, now. I'll help all of you a bit. *Ah!* Please come over here, Miss Charlotte. Usually, showing this kind of image is more important. *Hahahaha*," I told her.

I started helping them, and their appearances started to change as if they had participated in the battlefield together with the citizens. When we showed ourselves to the public, and while we were walking up to where Oscar was located, the people continued to cheer. Anyone could tell that the people of the empire had won, but the number of people who could walk on the platform was limited. Those with power

among us chose the executives of the Citizen Revolutionary Group who would get to stand with us. They were foreigners, but some were members of the Vatican. And some people may find this strange, but so what?

'The people are nothing but beasts… '

This kind of revolution was bound to be controlled by the media.

"*Hahahaha!* It's our victory, people of the empire!"

Oscar was right.

CHAPTER 294
A HALF REVOLUTION (9)

The situation wrapped up faster than I thought. As the new powers of the empire, the people cheered for us passionately and the Citizen Revolutionary Group shouted while honoring today's victory. As Oscar mentioned, the victory belonged to the people. Of course, I had a slightly different opinion, but I couldn't spoil their opinions. Making the majority of the people think that they had done this revolution themselves was the goal.

'That's the best thing to do… '

I couldn't help but nod with satisfaction.

Right after, they brought out a guillotine, and the people yelled to cut off the heads of the traitors, but the executives of the Citizen Revolutionary Group, the nobles, and especially Charlotte didn't want to do something so barbaric. They had to be dealt with according to the law, and in a humane and democratic way at that. Basically, they had to be judged fairly on the outside. Naturally, this trial would proceed the way the new powers wanted it to proceed, but it was important to give them hope that their outcome could be different. Whether they lost their heads today or a few days later, the result would be the same. The important part was who would get executed and who would get to toast to it.

'Being on the winning side is sweet.'

Nothing could be done about Charlia and the emperor, but the majority of the nobles were about to lose their heads. This was actually the positive part of this revolution. With Charlia at the center, this was our chance to get rid of all the incompetent trash all at once, and I was certain that even Charlotte wouldn't be able to go against this suggestion. There would be some blood, but the nobles preying upon the citizens would undeniably be gone.

There were some cities where the revolution was still ongoing, but they would probably be done at either dawn or tomorrow morning. Since we had completely removed the lump of cancer in the empire, it was a win-win situation for everyone,

and despite drinking cheap alcohol, I was actually enjoying this situation more than anyone else.

Lee Ji-Hye quietly sat next to me, and she couldn't stop smiling. As such, I assumed she had the same thought as me.

"You look like you're in a good mood." Lee Ji-Hye pointed out.

"I'm not in a bad mood," I said.

"Oppa," she called out.

"Yeah?"

"I'm sorry for doing this while you're having fun, but can we talk about work real quick? There are a few things that have to be taken care of right now," she replied.

"Of course, noona," I answered.

"*Hm*… First is an issue regarding the grain and goods stored in the castle storage," she started.

"Check the important ones separately and store them. You can do whatever you want with the rest of them. Categorize them by items and store the items you think will really help us…" I ordered.

"*Hm*… Then, I'll keep the goods and items stored in the castle storage like you said and open the grain to the public. I don't think it's a bad idea to be drunk on our victory. I think we'll still have some left, though…" she explained.

"Then give some of them to the nobles. I'm sure the west and southern nobles have a lot stored up, so they won't lack any of those. By the way, what's the situation like outside? Has everything been taken care of?" I asked.

"They're moving the corpses. I thought we took care of it pretty quickly, but more people died than I thought," she answered.

"Nothing we can do about that. The knights and mages from the castle aren't idiots, but it's a relief that Hee-Ra noona took care of Victor Hart. If it weren't for her, the situation would have been more difficult to handle. Even if that old man was at the

frontline, I can't imagine him attacking the citizens, but he's still one of the people representing the empire," I told her.

"You're right…"

"*Ah*. And bury all the dead in the national cemetery, noona. Get rid of all the unnecessary spaces in the castle and create a national cemetery in the corner for the fighters of democracy. Don't forget to create a grave for Arkimo and Barkdeku, as well. For the important figures, create a large tombstone or something," I ordered.

"That's going to be really difficult… Aren't you giving me too much work? I'm busy enough…" she complained.

"I'm busy with my own work as well," I said.

"Are you sure? You don't seem like it… That's not something a person who's drinking leisurely should be saying," she pointed out.

"This is all part of having a social life. After some time passes, I'm going to become *officially* busy. In this kind of situation, the end is more difficult than the beginning," I explained.

There were many things I had to take care of. I tried to reduce the damage to the properties as much as possible, but since the citizens in the entire empire had stood up, the damage was too great and expensive to handle. We could cover it with my personal assets, the resources stockpiled in the castle, and donations from the Vatican, but for the cities where their production facilities were destroyed, the issue was more serious than I thought. The fact that the useful knights were killed was a problem as well. When thinking about the resources it would take to train one knight, the damage was great.

There were citizens who were killed with swords and others who were completely scorched, as we couldn't protect them from the spells. However, the ones who were in a worse situation than them were the emperor and the soldiers who rebelled against the goddess. They couldn't get on the last train, and they died so horribly it was making me feel nauseous. Their deaths proved that the people were really furious.

Of course, some foreigners died as well. It was an unavoidable sacrifice because they had to face famous knights and mages, but none of the Eight Seats died. Galoshik of

Lindel and Lim Ri-Dan survived as well.

If the sight of the emperor running away wasn't shown live, the battle might have lasted a bit longer, and there could have been more damage. This kind of internal strife was bound to get fixed over time. This kind of issue that wasn't really an issue was an external issue that arose from internal issues.

'The Republic, Union of Kingdoms, and Kingdom of Others.'

We managed to stop external forces from participating in the revolution and from attacking during the chaotic situation, but the power of the Holy Empire was basically nonexistent in our current situation. Everyone was interested in what the Union of Kingdoms thought about this revolution, how the Republic would react to the change in power, and whether the Others would send an envoy.

It was a big blow for the continent— it was a blow enough to shake the continent's boring political scene. However, I had no idea whether it had a positive or a negative effect.

When I unknowingly looked away, I saw Lee Ji-Hye getting up from her seat. I was sure she had her own business to handle, but the sudden appearance of a guest may have caused her to walk away.

"Did something happen, Miss Charlotte?" I asked the guest.

She looked angry, and she had to be tipsy because she was holding a glass of alcohol.

"Can we move somewhere quieter?" she asked.

Naturally, I was worried when I heard her drunk voice, but I gladly agreed. Jung Ha-Yan was keeping an eye on me anyway, and since Park Deok-Gu was looking out for me, I was safe.

'I don't think this woman will suddenly take out a sword.'

I thought that maybe she would hit the back of my head really hard, but I was certain she wouldn't do anything like that.

"Sure, let's do that," I agreed.

It was up to the gentleman to escort a lady in a party like this. When I quietly extended my hand out, she grabbed my hand uncomfortably. Like the handshake from last time, she must have felt emotional because my hand started hurting. When we started walking and opened the large door, I saw a balcony where we could talk. Charlotte sat down on one side, and I sat down as well.

'She won't push me off here, right?'

When I thought about what I had done, I started to have scary thoughts. However, I didn't think she lured me out here to kill me when she started whispering.

"Why did you let me live?" Charlotte asked.

It felt like she called me out in the middle of the night to talk to me. I was bored anyway, so I didn't mind keeping her company. Obviously, I didn't know how to answer that question, but I could give her a vague answer.

'Kim Hyun-Sung told me to keep you alive.'

I couldn't tell her that…

"The reason is similar to what you told me before, Miss Charlotte. At the time, you said you needed someone who cared about the public's opinion. *Haha*. That's why and there's no reason to pretend. *Ah*, I guess you can say that's the answer to your question, so I'll change my answer. I have no reason to pretend around you," I answered.

"You have no reason to pretend…" she repeated.

"We're comrades who only cared about the revolution. Of course, our methods were kind of different, but in the end, the result was more than what we wanted. The people won, and the existing powers lost their powers," I added.

"And new powers had taken over those positions. You and the people in your faction." Charlotte pointed out.

"You seem to resent me, but I'll just overlook it. Even if this revolution ended up being a bloodless revolution, a new power will eventually take over those positions, and it's something inevitable. The nobles under your command aren't by your side because they share the same dream as you. Of course, there are probably one or two

people who wanted to make the same dreams come true, but the majority of the nobles in your faction won't choose to give up their powers," I explained.

This was a fact, and she had to have agreed with me because she looked at me quietly.

"Possessing the power to move the people is no different from drugs. I don't know about virtuous idealists like you, but I'm certain the majority of the nobles will agree with me," I continued.

"So that's why you killed the people. Many citizens and innocent soldiers had to die because of that power you call drugs," she commented.

"I'm not the one who killed them. I just fought for what they wanted. Yeah, I'm pretty sure the people will like it if you told them that the fighter of democracies' honorable sacrifice was meaningless," I sarcastically added.

"They didn't die because of the value they wanted. You basically brainwashed the people. You released fabricated information and pressured them before driving them to the edge." Charlotte pointed out.

"The nobles and the imperial family are at fault, not me. I fabricated some of the information, but what you saw through the goddess' mirror was the truth, Miss Charlotte," I said.

"There was no need… There was no need to do that!" Charlotte shouted.

The table on the balcony cracked when she slammed her hand on it. I thought she was only decent at swordsmanship, so I was kind of scared to see that side of hers. However, it wasn't like I had nothing to say. I knew exactly what Charlotte wanted, but if I tried to refute her words, I wouldn't be able to.

"If an honorable revolution did happen just like you wanted… do you really think it'll be any different from our current situation? I guarantee that the situation could have gotten worse, but it wouldn't have gotten any better," I told her.

"We wouldn't have to shed so much blood, at the very least. No, more than that, we wouldn't have to face so many issues. We could have protected the production facilities we had, and we could have stopped the external forces while maintaining our military force. The Union of Kingdoms wouldn't feel alienated either, and many

citizens wouldn't have to lose their families," she argued.

"I agree with your opinion. We could have minimized the damage, but we couldn't have avoided it completely. The important part was that the people themselves decided to rise up and shed their own blood. If you interfered, the people of this land would have lived passively. If they face this kind of situation next time, they won't move because they'll think people like you would help them," I explained.

"You're jumping to conclusions," she commented.

"I'm not, Miss Charlotte. You may not know it, but it has already been proven by the history of foreigners. Humans are a race that won't realize anything unless they learn. It applies to both the ruler and the subjects. The subjects would have to drag out the ruler with their own hands without the help of people like you. They have to try killing their king. And that's what we learned from history, Miss Charlotte," I said.

"Humans aren't that dumb. I don't know what you think about humans, but—"

"No, humans are idiots. They don't live life looking upon ideals like you do. I'm certain there are humans who just can't realize it on their own, but they will realize it after learning a lesson, and that's why this will be helpful to them. We did shed a lot of blood, but this will be a great lesson for them. After this, the rulers will fear the people and the people will remember the fact that they can bring down their leader and cut off their heads. Charlotte, you previously mentioned that you needed someone who cared about the public's opinion and even though this isn't a complete revolution, I believe the result I had created will have better effects than any other revolution. I'm a conscientious person, and I don't steal from the people. This victory will be remembered as the people's victory rather than mine, so this history will remain in their hearts forever," I clarified.

Charlotte continued speaking after listening to my words. I was sure she wanted to refute me, but if this conversation continued, it would feel like she was revealing everything about herself.

When I stood up quietly, she spoke cautiously, "I… I have one last… question!"

"Yes?" I asked. It seemed I wasn't the only one who thought that this debate was pointless.

"You… the land of the foreigners…"

“Yes, the people of that land have sovereignty on the outside,” I answered.

“Is that place… is that place…” Charlotte hesitantly muttered.

“*Ah*, I think I know what you’re asking. Well… I think this is the only thing I can tell you,” I started.

“…”

“Here or there, those with vested interests act the same way,” I said.

I didn’t want to destroy the dream of the girl who believed in Santa Claus, but the reality was harsh. Charlotte’s head drooped. When I left her, I saw Jung Ha-Yan and Kasugano Yuno who had come out to see me. Everyone was spending time in their own way. It made me think of many things, but like always, time would help me forget about everything. Some would share their happiness with others in their own way while others would dwell on their regrets. It was the same as usual and just like that, time slowly passed.

CHAPTER 295
TIME PASSED (1)

[The History of the Holy Empire Completely Ended after Being in Power for 1093 Years.]

[It was the will of the citizens who couldn't stand the imperial family anymore, as well as the nobles' wickedness, along with the will of the Goddess of Benigoa who wanted to get rid of the heretics, renegades, and traitors. On November 9th, when the revolution was completed, a trial was held for the traitors, which lasted for exactly one week. A week later, on the 23rd of the same month, an institution called the New People's Assembly was created by the Citizen Revolutionary Group.]

[The New People's Assembly was an organization that selected 200 citizens as representatives, and they established the constitution and human laws. The discussion of state affairs as well as its management is also in the hands of the assembly. The organization consists of 42 nobles who supported the declaration, 60 foreigners, and 98 ordinary citizens from the Citizen Revolutionary Group. This was their mighty first step in starting the new sacred democracy.]

[Their first task was none other than dealing with the renegades. The Vatican respected the will of the Citizen Revolutionary Group by handing the trial over to them. The first historical vote was held in the New People's Assembly, and with 199 in favor and one abstention, it was decided that the traitors would be executed. At the end of the 29th day of November, excluding Charlotte, everyone in the imperial family was executed along with the first princess, the last bloodline of the imperial family. The execution was carried out in a very humane way according to the former second princess' requests.]

[Shortly after, a provisional government was established, and a general election was held, which was organized by the New People's Assembly. It was the Sacred Democratic Church's proud…]

"Proud first general election."

"…"

"It hasn't been a year since the incident, but the people living in the Sacred Democratic Country have to know this information. I don't need to mention the fact that we could only claim this victory because many people had sacrificed themselves. The information you learned today will likely appear on the test, so you must know it. Now, let me ask a question. You learned this yesterday, too. Who is allowed to vote within our democratic country?"

"M-Me! Me! Me! Me!" Dialuria exclaimed.

"Okay, Luria. What's the answer?"

"All the citizens of this country and the foreigners!" Dialuria answered.

"You're right. Very good. I'll give you a good job card, so please get it after class. As Luria said, the leader of the Citizen Revolutionary Group and now the leader of our Sacred Democratic Country, Oscar, gave the people the right to vote right after she established the provisional government."

"Okay!"

After answering the question confidently, Diauria looked back, and the way she smiled brightly with a hat on her head was an amusing sight. Even though he had raised his hand, Museum Manager Max looked disappointed because he didn't get selected.

'Cute… '

Dialuria had to be very happy because she showed how well she was doing. I observed the class to keep my promise to Dialugia, but after seeing her expression, I became happy that I came here.

'I also have to see if they're doing a good job at teaching… '

Obviously, I was curious how Dialuria and Max were doing. Even though I couldn't act as their father every day, I had grown fond of them, so I wanted to see their growth and to be a little bit more honest, I had another reason aside from this personal reason.

I was interested in the current education system. The publication of government textbooks and the education based on them was just as important as outside work. I didn't set up this division so that it would be active for just a few years. It had to be active for at least ten; no, a hundred more years because the education of the citizens was a necessity rather than a choice.

History lessons weren't really important to Max and Dialuria, so I told them to let it in through one ear and out the other, but that didn't apply to the children next to them. History was considered more important than swordsmanship and magic and the children here today would become our loyal voters. Afterward, their children and their children's children would become our valuable voters as well.

This kind of work wasn't really necessary since I had complete control of the goddess' mirror, but more insurance was better.

'It only takes one moment to fall… '

It may seem a bit much, but educational institutions were being built all over the empire.

When I glanced over, I saw Dialugia smiling widely as she looked at Dialuria. The other parents were like her as well. Of course, I noticed them glancing at me, too. The children of former nobles, famous adventurer couples, as well as the children of rich families attended this private school; however, Holy Father Basel had appointed me as the Sacred Democratic Country's Honorary Cardinal. Moreover, I was the Sub Guild Master of Lindel's, no, the democratic country's most famous guild, so I could understand why they were looking at me.

'It's funny… '

Within the empire, there were less than ten people with more power than me, and without taking our official positions into account, there were at least three people more powerful than me. The citizens had succeeded in completing a great revolution, but the gap between statuses was still there. A lot had changed, but the key point was that it *felt* like nothing had changed. Similar to what I had explained to Charlotte, I could guarantee that the crucial parts would remain the same.

"Isn't our Dialuria really smart?" Dialugia asked.

"Of course she is. Do you know who she takes after?" I questioned.

“I believe she takes it from me,” she answered.

I was confident that Dialuria was smart because of me.

“It looks like history class will be over soon. Next is the swordsmanship demonstration, and there will be a magic demonstration after that. Let’s hurry and move. *Ah*, Dialuria said she’s going to learn alchemy after school, so you must take a look,” Dialugia explained.

“I was going to do it even without you pestering me about it. By the way, Dialugia, is there… really a need for her to learn that? I don’t think Smartie really needs that…” I mentioned.

“Aren’t you the one who suggested that she attend school?” Dialugia pointed out.

“It’s all for the sake of gaining some social skills… not to take these kinds of lessons,” I answered.

“It’ll be good to learn about things at the least. It’s true that it’s useless to dragons, but our Dialuria said she wanted to learn and these types of activities really help in brain development as well… She has also been learning basic combat skills despite her young age. And she may not be an expert at history yet, but she has become somewhat familiar with the history of the continent,” she replied.

“*Ah,* you’re right.”

“Regardless, it’s definitely helpful that she has been using her brain a lot, especially during this time. She even has more mana than the other children her age,” she continued.

“How can you compare her to others when there aren't any other dragons?” I asked.

“You can just tell, *hehe*,” Dialugia answered with a giggle.

I didn’t think anyone loved their daughter as much as Dialugia did and for some reason, my face started turning red. I thought she had changed a little bit, but it seemed like she had become a helicopter mom.[1] The only difference was that compared to before, Smartie wasn’t keeping her distance from her mom anymore, but when I saw her expression, Smartie looked as if she didn’t like me standing next to her mother.

“That’ll be it for today’s lesson. The swordsmanship demonstration will begin shortly, so the students must arm themselves, and the parents can start heading toward the tourney hall,” the teacher instructed.

Since things were happening just like Dialugia said, she had to have thoroughly memorized the schedule.

Anyway, we started walking just like the teacher instructed and on our way there, I didn’t forget to greet those who greeted me.

“Father Lee Ki-Young. *Hahaha*. I never imagined I’d run into you here,” Senator Chenko greeted.

“Yes, it’s been a while, Senator Chenko. *Haha*. What a coincidence. Isn’t this our first time seeing each other after that incident? How have you been doing lately?” I asked.

“I’ve always been great, and Miss Oscar is still the same. I have been worried because there are so many issues that have to be taken care of…” Senator Chenko muttered.

“Is there something difficult to deal with?” I asked.

“It’s the usual. It’s the Union of Kingdoms again,” he answered.

“*Ahhh*.”

“I don’t know if it’s because they feel threatened after the revolution, but they aren’t being friendly to us just yet. The Republic sent a congratulatory message, but there hasn’t been any reaction from them since then, so it has been really frustrating for us. I don’t know what the Office of Foreign Affairs is up to… but anyway, things still feel out of place internally,” he explained.

“That’s a given. I’m certain the Union of Kingdoms is worried that a revolution may start internally. They’re concerned that they might get affected by our revolution. You don’t have to worry too much, Senator. I’m sure a solution will present itself after some time passes,” I assured him.

“*Hm*, I see.”

“Actually, my trip to a neutral country is also related to that, so you don’t have to worry,” I added.

“Is that right?”

“The kingdom cannot keep maintaining that kind of attitude because the majority of the foreigners living there are kind to us,” I continued.

“You’re talking about the goddess’ mirror,” he commented.

“That’s right. It’s the same for the citizens, but the foreigners are very used to the goddess’ mirror. Unlike the vested interests of the kingdom, the foreigners who had settled there are hoping that they could import the goddess’ mirror,” I explained.

The appearance of television in this barren land meant that they would want it as well. The denizens of Lindel, Celia, and Dawan reacted positively to it. Instead of creating a mirror that covered the sky, it was important to make it small so that it could be placed in every house. It was a short period of time, but dramas and movies started surfacing and the *‘Master of Battle’* which we had aired as a test achieved a very high rating. Of course, the people would react positively to it since the masters who had been in this field for many years had told us tips and tricks about what was needed on the battlefield. The citizens, who were *very* interested in the foreigners, started falling for that stupid box one by one, and I was certain that each of the kingdoms within the Union of Kingdoms was struggling due to the requests of the foreigners who were asking them to import the goddess’ mirror.

‘Culture and technology are weapons as well.’

In some ways, they were more dangerous than a sword or spear.

While I was having other thoughts, I heard Dialugia’s voice.

“It’s Dialuria’s turn now. She’s doing it now…”

“*Ah*, okay, I’m coming,” I told her.

The swordsmanship demonstration started, but I didn’t expect much because the result was pretty clear. Our Smartie crushed the children around her with just her basic physical abilities, and as expected, she displayed her swordsmanship skills by using her physical abilities against the citizens. She was openly showing her bad manners.

‘She’s better than most adventurers… ’

Moreover, she was using her sword-wielding opponent to stand out rather than finishing them off. Anyone could tell that her opponent had better swordsmanship, but the kid Smartie was fighting against couldn't keep up with her agility and strength. Even worse, Smartie would always point her sword at her opponent and show everyone her next move before ending the fight.

'I feel really bad for her opponent… '

The child had to have been training their swordsmanship for a long time, and they bit their lips as they tried their best not to disappoint their parents. However, no matter how much they trained, they were no match for Smartie. There was just *that* big of a difference between their basic stats, so the kid was basically being humiliated. My stats were low as well, so I couldn't help but emphatize with the child. I was even ashamed of Dialugia giggling and clapping next to me.

"Don't you think our Dialuria is very skilled? I don't know much about swordsmanship, but I can't even compare her to the other children. It hasn't even been a year since she officially started training, so her talent has to be a gift from heaven," Dialugia said.

'Your daughter is a dragon, and she's just forcing her victories through strength… '

"She's trying not to hurt her opponent as well; she's very considerate…" Dialugia added.

'She's humiliating them rather than being considerate of them… '

"I think I'm disgracing myself here," she remarked.

'You are… '

The things I wanted to say remained bottled up inside me.

"The winner is Dialuria."

"Good job, my daughter! Dialuria! You're the best! You're the best, Dialuria!" Dialugia shouted.

It was ridiculous how Smartie even did a victory pose while looking at me. I had no idea whom she had taken after, but her bad manners were on a whole new level.

1. A helicopter parent is a parent who pays extremely close attention to a child's or children's experiences and problems, particularly at educational institutions. ☜

CHAPTER 296
TIME PASSED (2)

The world changed as time passed. To be exact, the empire; no, the land that was now called the Sacred Democratic Country and its surrounding state of affairs were the only things that changed. However, it was undeniable that positive changes were happening internally.

The part that stood out the most was that there were no longer ranks confining the empire. Of course, there had to be unofficial classes. The majority of the nobles still possessed enormous wealth and were called Senators. Charlotte was also in charge of one of the groups within the New People's Assembly. The news that the caste system was officially abolished was enough to cause joy among the citizens. It meant that special classes like nobles and imperial families no longer existed. Obviously, special classes like priests were necessary, but since we were using the title Sacred Democracy, no one discussed the benefits the Vatican were holding. Rather, there was a widespread perception that priests serving the goddess deserved even greater power than before based on *Sacred* Democracy.

Everything went according to my plans. Even though the distribution was still ongoing, the goddess' mirror was provided to each household, and the content displayed on those mirrors was information advantageous to the current government and the foreigners. A lot of information were released, but the information ordinary citizens could access was extremely limited. Anything that would put me at a disadvantage was excluded. The name of the television was Goddess' Mirror, and the majority of the citizens who understood it as the goddess' blessing had obviously gotten captivated by the dumb box.

Thanks to that, controlling public opinion through the media became a piece of cake. I thought maybe our society would become similar to the society depicted in George Orwell's novel that I had read a long time ago, but that was what I wanted from the start. Animals would never leave their cage if they were comfortable inside of it. The doors to the breeding farm the citizens were locked in had been open for quite some time now, but no one chose to leave it.

'All that matters is their happiness.'

No one cared about the truth. I wasn't sure whether it was because of the goddess' blessing, but I could leave the internal issues to our Oscar, who was also known as Aris. Of course, there were some issues, but she was working just like I had intended and most of all, she was enthusiastic and motivated at work. At this point, I had to focus on the external issues more than the internal ones.

'Those kingdom bastards must be out of their minds.'

Naturally, Senator Chenko's words remained in my head. The Union of Kingdoms was very sensitive to our every move, and I could understand their reaction. Since their land was close to us, and we even killed our emperor during the revolution, they were worried that a similar revolution might break out in the kingdom they were ruling. The situation could be understood just by looking at Earth's world history, but I didn't like the fact that the Union of Kingdoms was trying to isolate us. The number of our democratic knights had decreased by a lot, so I wanted to avoid losing foreign forces.

'Alliance.'

For the democratic country's survival survive, we needed allies, and we also needed to improve our relationship with the Republic. Naturally, there was a limit to what could be done with just internal discussion.

Selecting the neutral nation, Laios, as my first diplomatic task was a very reasonable choice, but of course, Dialugia wasn't satisfied with the news.

"So, you're really heading outside today?" Dialugia asked.

"You know very well that the situation is unavoidable. I even told you about it a few days ago… I think I have also been visiting the nest more often recently after I finish work…" I pointed out.

"It's something you've never done before, and you only did the bare minimum of what a father is supposed to do. You know that it's nothing to boast about nor is it enough to use as a bargaining chip," Dialugia argued.

"It won't take long, and since I attended the lessons today—"

“It’s a promise you were supposed to keep a few months ago,” she reminded me.

“There was nothing I could do. How can I visit a class when the school was closed in the first place due to extensive remodeling? We ended up being able to visit a large school with a better environment, so it’s unfair to blame me for that. While we’re on the subject, I’m a busy person, and despite that, I have been pouring my heart and soul toward Smartie. Smartie is enjoying herself very much and if you keep complaining, I’ll be disappointed. Could there be another reason you don't want me to leave the nest aside from Smartie?” I asked.

“What do you—”

“Perhaps you’re the one who doesn’t want to send me away…” I replied.

I said it to provoke Dialugia, but I noticed her frown.

She looked like she was asking me, *“What kind of bullshit are you spouting?”*

I couldn’t help but be hurt by her reaction.

‘Shit… I’m popular, too, you know.’

Even though the people who loved me were *very* interesting people, they weren’t treating me like how Dialugia was treating me, at the least. Naturally, I felt angry because Dialugia looked at me as if I was nothing but a bug. Then, I saw Smartie; no, Dialuria and Max running toward us after they were done with their lessons, so I wrapped my arm around Dialugia’s waist. Her body quivered for a moment, but in front of Smartie, we had to act like a happy couple. When I pulled her close to me, Dialugia glanced at me and frowned, but she couldn’t let go of me because she was conscious about Dialuria. After all, the solution Doctor Kang Hyun-Wook had given us was still being administered.

“Dad! Today I…!”

“I watched it all, Dialuria. I could tell how hard you’ve been working,” I told her.

“*Hehehe!*”

“You’ve been working hard on the things your mother taught you as well, right? How was it for you, Dialugia?” I asked.

Naturally, I looked at Dialugia lovingly. She then acted affectionate for the sake of her daughter, even though she was frowning just a few moments ago.

“I enjoyed it, darling. By the way, you were amazing, Dialuria. The swordsmanship demonstration you did was really…” she paused.

“…”

We probably looked nauseating in Smartie’s eyes, thanks to her Twisted Affection habit. And the way she stared at her mother was scary. Dialugia seemed flustered when I expressed my affection to her as if I was giving her my endless love, and it was to the point that she glanced at me, hinting at me to stop.

‘Screw you, too.’

It was a dirty and timid revenge, but I felt better.

“I watched you too, my son,” I said.

“I-I see…” Max stuttered.

“Are you getting along with Dialuria?” I asked.

“*Ah*… y-yes, Father,” he replied.

“Yup!” Dialuria answered.

Honestly, they didn’t seem like they were getting along. Max still couldn’t forget the body slam he had suffered from Smartie during their first meeting, so he was still having a hard time getting along with Smartie. And Smartie herself seemed like she still didn’t like her younger brother. I thought issues like this would get resolved over time, but it was taking longer than I thought.

Anyway, the class visit, which was considered a pretty big task for me, finally ended. We ate and enjoyed our time together on our way back to the nest, but it was about time for me to depart for Laios. As expected, Smartie tightly grabbed my pants while crying and even though he wasn’t good at expressing himself, Max looked sad as well.

“I’ll be right back so you have to wait for me and listen to your mother. Take good

care of the museum, Max. Something came up, so we'll have to postpone the museum's opening…" I informed him.

"I understand," he said.

"Alright. Smart—I mean, Dialuria. I really won't take long this time, so don't worry," I assured her.

"Okay…"

"Let me give you a hug. Come here," I offered.

The way she ran toward me was cute, and I almost flinched because it had been a while since she ran at me in her dragon form. Her saliva was all over my face as she screeched, but I wasn't disgusted by it. Max looked awkward because of the daughter and father's sad parting, so when I waved to him as well, he approached me.

'He changed a bit as well… '

He was becoming more and more like a child. Even when our Smartie was in her human form, she would stick to me and screech, but Max seemed like he was always *really* awkward. However, it could be a side effect of establishing a connection with me so suddenly. I had been giving him the best of everything, as he was the number one contributor in the creation of the magic hologram, but the fact that he was being comfortable around me was a different story. It was only recently that Max started acting this way little by little, so I couldn't help but think that he was *truly* changing. When I patted his head once, a small smile appeared on his face, so I assumed he didn't mind being treated like a child.

'How cute… '

When I started thinking about the changes and the environment, I started having various thoughts on the way to the Guild House because the surroundings and Max weren't the only things that changed.

The Blue Guild had also experienced a huge change. First, Lee Chang-Ryeol, Yoo Ah-Young, and Han Sora—these three were rookies when they joined the Blue Guild's second party, but they had grown so much they were no longer rookies. Lee Chang-Ryeol's growth was especially strong that he surprised me. His dirty and cheap battle sense stood out to me more than his stats and abilities. As a blacksmith, Yoo Ah-

Young was finally skilled enough to handle Dialugia's scale, and even though she was kind of lacking as a tank, she still managed to grow into a vanguard who could endure attacks based on her outstanding stamina. It was the same for Han Sora. She was still a one-eyed lame; however, in addition to establishing contracts with monsters, she was already on the verge of making a direct contract with a demon. Obviously, her growth as a black mage was a secret between the two of us. Ahn Ki-Mo was still the same, but he was putting all his efforts into raising party two's level until it was comparable to party one along with Hwang Jung-Yeon, who had officially become Park Deok-Gu's woman.

'Of course, it's impossible… '

The Blue Guild's main party was the country's current; no, the continent's best party. Park Deok-Gu had become renowned for his position as a pure tank, and I found it problematic that he hadn't really changed. Of course, his skills didn't remain stagnant. Perhaps he didn't want to experience the hidden camera prank again, but he was training like a madman, which helped him climb up to a good position. He had also gotten skilled enough to duel with Kim Hyun-Sung's eternal adjutant, Jo Hye-Jin.

Kim Ye-Ri, who was known to be a genius from the start, had grown tremendously and even though she no longer had the face of a child, a part of her remained unchanging. Sun Hee-Young had also grown to be a high-ranking priest, and she became the successor of my Honorary Bishop title. Her holy power was also strong enough for her position.

Basically, the Blue Guild was growing stronger and stronger in both power and politics that we couldn't handle it anymore. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that we were walking down a promising future; however, despite all this growth, there were uncertainties that kept on bothering me.

To be exact, I was worried about two people.

One was our lovely regressor, Kim Hyun-Sung, and the other was Jung Ha-Yan, whom I was growing increasingly concerned about more than Kim Hyun-Sung, as she was pretty quiet nowadays.

'She's too quiet. Shit… Why is she so quiet these days?'

To make me feel this anxious despite doing nothing could be considered a skill. The atmosphere felt like it was the calm before the storm, and I knew this apprehension wasn't just my imagination.

CHAPTER 297
TIME PASSED (3)

To be honest, I didn't have any big issues with Kim Hyun-Sung. He was still doing a good job as the guild master and as one of the Eight Seats of the country, he was handling many tasks simultaneously. He took the rookies to an epic-ranked dungeon and obviously, he didn't neglect his own growth. Charlotte disliked him a bit, but he seemed to be reestablishing his relationship with her by meeting her regularly. Moreover, while he was filming a love comedy with Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Ye-Ri, he also regularly met with Park Yeon-Joo, the Guild Master of the Black Swan Guild. He was handsome and competent, so women would obviously fall in love with him. Basically, he was having it easy these days.

Even though everyone was busy organizing the country's internal matters, it was undeniable that we had a relaxing and peaceful time. I was certain the incident a few months ago was the cause of it.

It honestly wasn't a big deal. Basically, a small event was held for the guild members, and from my perspective, it was kind of a funny incident. About two months ago, our regressor summoned the guild members in a serious tone and went on an ambitious expedition. I thought that going on an expedition was a bit too much because we were *really* busy organizing things internally, but I had no choice but to trust him. It was very rare for him to summon everyone, so I assumed he had a reason. Kim Hyun-Sung's face was filled with a great sense of responsibility to prepare for one of the disasters that would happen in the future, so I couldn't help but feel nervous. Kim Hyun-Sung seemed like he hadn't taken into account the deaths in case something went wrong. The other guild members continued the expedition while questioning his intention, but nothing happened when we reached our destination, which surprised us. What we saw was the underground area of an average-ranked dungeon, and the expedition group looked at Kim Hyun-Sung with confusion. Rather than a future disaster or a dark secret that would put him in danger, there were small, cute monsters in the area that never attacked unprovoked, so we placed a mat and enjoyed our camping trip.

"Well… all of you seemed really busy recently… so I prepared this. It's a… pep rally. Yes,

that's right. So I hope you enjoy… this break."

He wasn't good at lying, and I still couldn't forget how his face kept on quivering back then. He searched every corner of the dungeon to see if his memory was wrong, but of course, he couldn't find anything. He confirmed with his own eyes that the future had changed. He seemed relieved, but at the same time, he seemed nervous. Seeing our lovely regressor in that state broke my heart. Of course, I understood how he felt because he had been dealing with many surprising things in his current position.

'He's probably thinking that the future had changed too much… '

If this world was like his past life, then at this point, the city where Park Deok-Gu and I lived should have already disappeared from the map, and Park Deok-Gu should have been dead as well. It was during this time that Kasugano Yuno found me in the ruins. I was sure some of the timing would be off, but when calculating the timing of things, that was what should have happened. The Lee Ki-Young of the Dark World was being taken care of in Kasugano Yuno's room during this time, and even though I didn't know the details of what happened, the incident caused the disappearance of a city. I was certain everyone had incessantly been talking about this incident in his past life. Regardless of the reason, the city I had seen through Kasugano Yuno got completely destroyed to the extent that it was unrecognizable.

However, that didn't happen in this life. The dirty murderer, Jung Jin-Ho, was killed before he had gotten stronger and we stopped the founding of the Murder Brigade. We had even stopped the devil worshiper Ito Sota from taking control of Lindel and summoning the devil thanks to my work—the honorary bishop. The Yozora Guild grew, some influential figures became cautious upon the creation of the media, and the sacred democracy was established in this empire. All these were thanks to me.

Many big incidents took place, so a butterfly effect was inevitable. Obviously, Ito Sota and Jung Jin-Ho's spies, as well as the people who had been working with them never came out into the world, so the members of the Murder Clan were tremendously low.

And since the Free City of Celia and Lindel were paying close attention to security, it wouldn't be strange at all that some of the future disasters Kim Hyun-Sung had experienced would never happen. He should be happy about this, but from his point of view, I was sure he was anxious as well. The big picture he had for the continent may have remained the same, but the merit of knowing the future was slowly disappearing, which wasn't something to be happy about. However, Kim Hyun-Sung

poured that anxiety over to his training and obsession to grow stronger. He started wandering around the continent more frequently, and he seemed like he was chasing after someone. Considering our current situation, he could have relaxed, but he chose to push himself even more, so he could get rid of his anxiety.

'The fact that he's anxious… '

It was making me anxious as well. This was the only thing that bothered me about Kim Hyun-Sung, but Jung Ha-Yan was a different story.

"*Huh*? Hyung-nim!" Park Deok-Gu called out.

I heard a voice while I was spacing out.

"Hey, Deok-Gu," I greeted.

When I lifted my head, I saw the same old Park Deok-Gu. Besides the fact that his frame had grown bigger, he still looked the same. The way he ran toward me while being wary of his surroundings was amusing. He seemed like he was guarding me, but unfortunately for him, I wasn't in any danger.

"Wandering around by yourself is dangerous. If you sent a message through the carrier pigeon, I would have met you at the nest," he said.

"Danger, my ass… We're inside Lindel anyway… By the way, is Ha-Yan not with you?" I asked.

"I think noonim has locked herself in her room today, too… I asked her to come with me to see you, but she declined and said she was busy," he replied.

'I'm getting worried… '

I guarantee that the Jung Ha-Yan I knew would have never done something like that. She was strangely quiet these days, but there were some small changes in her actions.

"By the way, you and noonim seemed to be spending more time apart recently… Did you two fight?" he asked.

"Of course not…" I answered.

“If there’s something on your mind, how about consulting Park Deok-Gu, the Love Doctor—”

“It’s nothing like that,” I said, cutting him off.

“I’m sure even you have things you’re worried about. I’ll gladly listen to your troubles with an open mind,” he offered.

‘It would actually be better if we did fight, you bastard… ’

If we truly had a lover’s quarrel, I wouldn’t be this nervous. To be honest, her usual behavior was basically the same, and one thing I was relieved about was the fact that Jung Ha-Yan was still stalking me. She would sometimes watch me through Anemone’s Eyes, and whenever we saw each other, she would stick to me as always. There were many times when she insisted that we go on dates and even made moves to physically express her affection to me. The part that changed was that she wasn’t trying to spend time with me around the clock as she had always done before. Nowadays, the average time she spent with me in one day was less than five hours. The situation was unbelievable compared to the times when she had always tried to spend all day with me. I thought that maybe she simply matured, but it was unlikely.

‘No. It’s possible that she really… did mature, but… ’

There were times when it seemed like she was trying to suppress herself. For example, she didn’t throw a fit when I went to go see Hee-Ra noona or Kasugano Yuno. Moreover, when I went out to eat dinner or didn't return to the Guild House because I was busy, she didn’t come looking for me. She still told me to return as soon as possible while waving her hand and biting her lips, but she seemed to be telling herself not to cause any trouble.

I welcomed that side of her, but Jung Ha-Yan seemed like she was putting herself under a lot of stress, and I could tell just by watching her from the side. The nails on her right hand were a mess because she had been biting them so much, and she also looked exhausted due to the lack of sleep. In addition, I would sometimes see her mumble to herself and yell out the word “idiot,” so I was understandably nervous. Jung Ha-Yan had become considerably quieter compared to before, but she was like a bomb that could explode at any moment. And since this situation had been going on for several months now, there were sometimes when I took the initiative to approach her.

'I hope she's just not playing hard to get.'

Obviously, I couldn't imagine her doing that, but if this was her actual plan, then her plan could already be considered halfway to success, as I had been spending more and more time worrying about Jung Ha-Yan.

"What is she doing?" I asked.

"It seems to be the same thing as usual… but isn't Ha-Yan noonim going to Laios with you?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"She is…" I replied.

"I think I heard her say that… she was making preparations…" he mentioned.

'Maybe she really did mature.'

I couldn't imagine Jung Ha-Yan being the first to pack up and wait for us, but if Park Deok-Gu's words were true, then I thought it was safe to assume that she matured.

Walking slowly, I soon reached the Guild House. A guild staff member greeted me, and I greeted the new members as well as the other guild members.

"Miss Hee-Young."

"You're here, Mr. Ki-Young. Are you leaving now? There's something I need to discuss with you regarding the Vatican…" she requested.

"Yes, I need to leave as soon as I gather my things. If it won't take long then…"

"It's fine. I think it'll be better if we discuss it next time," she suggested.

"I'm sorry," I apologized.

"No, no. There's no need to apologize," she said.

After saying goodbye to Sun Hee-Young, I checked in on Han Sora, who had decided to go with me. Her urinary incontinence whenever she saw Jung Ha-Yan had gotten somewhat better and since she was actually competent, I thought it was only right to take her as an adjutant.

I couldn't help but think that she was trustworthy when I saw that she was already done packing up and was ready to leave. Since I couldn't afford to make Cha Hee-Ra and Kasugano Yuno wait for me again, I had to go upstairs and grab my things.

'What in the world is she doing…? Is she really preparing for the trip?'

Naturally, I was most curious about what Jung Ha-Yan was up to. This was the first time she hadn't shown her face, even though I had already returned to the Guild House.

All of a sudden, there was a *boom,* and the door of the next room flew away.

That was when I heard Jung Ha-Yan's excited voice…

"I-I did it. I-I really did it… It's done! *Hehehe!* It's done!!"

The way she mumbled to herself in joy sounded very familiar, so naturally, I peeked into her room. And when I saw Jung Ha-Yan in her room, I couldn't help but swallow a mouthful of my own saliva.

'What the… '

It was so absurd all I could do was laugh.

'Magic… magic stat… 99.'

Jung Ha-Yan immediately looked toward me.

CHAPTER 298
MAGIC STAT 99 (1)

"O-Oppa! I-I did it!" Jung Ha-Yan shouted.

"*Ah*… that's great…" I mumbled.

"I-I finally did it!!" she stuttered.

Jung Ha-Yan's face was flushed red, and her voice was filled with excitement. The way she ran toward me with open arms as if she were asking me for a hug caught me off guard, as this was the first time she was acting this way. When I cautiously opened my arms and rubbed her back, she took a deep breath and dug her face deeper into my chest.

'She's still the same… '

Nothing really changed about her, but the mana vibrating within her body bothered me a lot.

'Her magic stat is 99… '

I couldn't help but think about her even more, and although it was ridiculous, the information before me was real. I was so shocked I started coughing. Of course, I knew she was going to grow, but I had never imagined she would grow this quickly because when a specific stat was in the 90s, its growth would become noticeably slower. If the growth limit of a stat was above epic rank, then going above that was almost impossible. As such, increasing stats above legendary rank was difficult.

In Jung Ha-Yan's case, her magic stat was at 90, and since she had succeeded in assimilating a legendary-ranked item, her stat was amplified. Even though the increase in her magic stats had been instantaneous, it was definitely an unusual route, so I was sure there would be side effects. She had decided to increase her stat because she wanted to become strong as soon as possible; however, she ended up in a situation where she had to study her skills. At the end of it, her magic stat reached 98 points. However, if she wanted another one-point increase, she had to spend

about three to four years to achieve it.

Even Kim Hyun-Sung believed it would take Jung Ha-Yan a long time to digest and assimilate all the knowledge she had received, and he expected her to take at least a year to learn to master the spells from the legendary item, Anemone.

'She completely proved him wrong… '

The fact that Jung Ha-Yan's magic stat was now 99 meant she had absorbed all the magic stat from the Blood-Stained Red Jewel Anemone, and as if that wasn't enough, it seemed that she was breaking her limits as well.

I hadn't really seen her use her magic nowadays, so I had never imagined she would grow this much all of a sudden.

'So, this was what she had been doing… '

Even though it wasn't my business, she had to have restricted herself until she achieved her goal. To clap in joy for her was just the right thing to do, but after thinking about how this unpredictable rugby ball had become a superhuman, I couldn't be happy for her.

'Just how much has she grown?'

I couldn't measure her combat strength.

'Shit… I hope she's not stronger than Kim Hyun-Sung.'

That probably wasn't the case. Jung Ha-Yan's growth was particularly in magic and intelligence. Moreover, a mage's duel couldn't be compared to a swordsman's or a warrior's duel. However, I believe that when it came to firepower, mages were just as strong as them. I wanted to use the combat power meter called Park Deok-Gu, but he would be roasted in an instant if he received one of Jung Ha-Yan's spells, regardless of his strength.

When it came to pure firepower, Jung Ha-Yan could be within the top three within Lindel; no, within the country. Even after considering her low combat proficiency and the various side effects of her speedy growth, the impact of 99 magic points was still there.

Naturally, I was both happy and anxious, but it was the priority to congratulate her on her growth.

“What’s going on?” I asked.

“*Ah!* M-My magic stat increased. It’s 99 now! I can now use the spells I couldn’t use before, and I think I can t-test out the spells I have been thinking about!” Jung Ha-Yan answered.

“*Oh,* yeah?” I asked.

“Yes!”

“That’s really amazing. Even Mr. Hyun-Sung said it would take you a few years,” I mentioned.

“I-I did my best. I-I still did my best while thinking about you and another reason is that I-I haven’t been able to take care of you in many ways, oppa,” she said.

Even though Jung Ha-Yan said that she hadn’t been taking care of me, we had spent quite a lot of time together.

“We can now spend a little more time together, oppa. *Hehe*,” she added.

“That’s great. All this time, I thought you wanted to be by yourself,” I told her.

“No! That’s not true! Never! Whenever I’m with you, I keep having other thoughts…” she explained.

“*Ah*… got it…”

I had an idea as to what those other thoughts were, but I didn’t ask her for the details.

“You’re tired, right? You seem like you haven’t been sleeping…” I pointed out.

“Yes, I… kind of am,” she answered.

“It’s probably best if I go to Laios alone, right?” I asked.

“Of course not! I-I’m perfectly fine! I’m not tired at all! L-Let’s sleep together.[1] I mean, let’s go together, oppa. I’m almost done packing up!” she yelled.

I didn’t think I could go without her anyway.

Jung Ha-Yan’s room looked like some kind of ruin, and she still hadn’t even packed my bag, let alone hers. An unknown nervousness filled me up, and it made me want to go without her; however, leaving her in this state bothered me as well. I was conflicted, but taking her with me was the right choice.

Jung Ha-Yan quickly ran into her room and started packing in case I changed my mind. She had to be in a good mood because she was humming while smiling, and she seemed really confident in herself.

She was probably planning on buying all the necessities in Laios because she only packed a few clothes along with her makeup, and naturally, I went into my room and started packing as well. Moments later, Jung Ha-Yan and I walked downstairs, and I saw Park Deok-Gu and Han Sora waiting for us. Han Sora flinched a bit as soon as Jung Ha-Yan walked down, but she remained calm, and Park Deok-Gu was relieved when he saw how happy Jung Ha-Yan looked because he realized that she was in a good mood.

“You’re not going to say anything to the guild master bro?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“I told him yesterday, and he said he wouldn’t be able to see us out because he has something to take care of today. Let’s hurry. We’ll be late,” I replied.

“We’re late because you two came down late, but if we hurry, we’ll arrive on time. Worst-case scenario, I’ll run while carrying all three of you,” he offered.

“No thanks… Anyway, let’s go. It should be fine as long as we’re not too late,” I said.

“Fine…”

We headed out after saying goodbye to the people who came to see us out. And I even saw Kim Hyun-Sung even though he had said he may not be able to see us out. I was happy to see him, but I didn’t bother to talk sweetly to him. He seemed anxious lately, so I extended my hand out with a smile, and he did the same.

“I’m leaving now,” I told him.

“I’ll contact you if something happens,” Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

“Okay…”

I wouldn’t be gone long, so I kept the conversation short, and since I didn’t want to make the mistake of making the Red Mercenary Guild wait, I had to leave quickly.

Jung Ha-Yan looked proud while she was tightly holding my arm, Park Deok-Gu looked worried that we would be late, and Han Sora was keeping her distance from Jung Ha-Yan. During all of this, Jung Ha-Yan looked as if she was expecting a reward for being away from me because she started moving closer to me. Obviously, I felt kind of uneasy, but giving her what she wanted right now was the right thing to do, as putting her in a bad mood would never be good.

‘Does she think I like it the faster she becomes stronger?’

That was probably one of the reasons, but there was probably another reason as well. Thinking about it now, the first time Jung Ha-Yan became obsessed with power was when she saw a really strong person with her own eyes. After that, she experienced situations where she needed power, and those moments became the driving force that accelerated her growth. If my assumption were correct, then I would probably end up in a difficult situation.

After exchanging various conversations, I saw a few people waiting for us at the rendezvous point. She was wearing provocative clothes, just like the first time we met, which definitely made her attractive, and her hair fluttered in the wind. She was the guild master of the Red Mercenary Guild as well as one of the assembly members of the country. Worthy of the name, Lindel’s Number One, she was the Mercenary Queen Cha Hee-Ra. It was like her to run toward me and talk with her arm around my shoulders.

Jung Ha-Yan flinched for a moment, but all she could do was stare at Cha Hee-Ra.

“You’re kind of late, darling.” Cha Hee-Ra pointed out.

“*Ah*, my work finished kind of late…” I said.

“Your lies don’t work on me… I’m sure you were late because you were dilly-dallying at the Guild House. Anyway, let’s go. *Ah*, it has been a while, second girlfriend,” she greeted.

“It has…” Jung Ha-Yan mumbled.

“How have you been?” she asked.

“Fine…” she replied.

Jung Ha-Yan’s expression looked strange. She wasn’t doing it openly, but she looked as if she was testing Cha Hee-Ra. Jung Ha-Yan didn’t consider Cha Hee-Ra an enemy, but she looked as if she was about to start something.

‘Shit… What’s wrong with her?’

I wasn’t sure how to describe it, but Jung Ha-Yan was slowly looking up and down at Cha Hee-Ra while waving her finger. Cha Hee-Ra, who was taking me to the carriage, obviously stopped walking at that gesture. She turned her head and looked straight at Jung Ha-Yan, who was looking at her, and even though they weren’t saying anything, I felt like I was caught in the middle of it. The Jung Ha-Yan danger meter Han Sora limped behind the combat power meter Park Deok Gu. And the sudden situation silenced Park Deok-Gu as well.

It felt like a bomb was about to explode, and this wasn’t the right time for me to intervene. After all, the two were just looking at each other, and Jung Ha-Yan wasn’t doing anything rude to Cha Hee-Ra.

“What? Got something you want to say to me?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“N-Not… really…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“So, why are you staring at me like that, *huh?*” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“H-How was I staring at you?” Jung Ha-Yan questioned.

‘Shit. Please don’t do this… ’

Our surroundings and the people who had gathered to go to Laios with us suddenly became quiet. And I had the urge to pray to the Goddess of Benigoa.

I wasn’t sure if it was a good thing, but when Jung Ha-Yan slightly lowered her head, the corner of Cha Hee-Ra’s lips went up, and she started talking to me again. Obviously, she placed her arm back on my shoulders and stuck her breasts close to

me.

“Let’s go in, darling,” Cha Hee-Ra suggested.

That was when Jung Ha-Yan muttered…

“I think… you should remove your arm…”

Even though she had said it in a low voice, it was loud enough for us to hear.

“I-It’s making oppa uncomfortable…” Jung Ha-Yan continued.

“…”

“…”

“What?” Cha Hee-Ra questioned.

‘Shit guys, please don’t do this… ’

A small smile appeared on Jung Ha-Yan’s face, and Cha Hee-Ra’s expression was indescribable.

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1. In Korean, “sleep” and “go” almost sound the same, so that's why JHY made that mistake ☜

CHAPTER 299
MAGIC STAT 99 (2)

The atmosphere became heavy, and for some reason, it was getting harder to breathe. Even though there wasn't any magic or anything threatening, there was this indescribable oppression boring down on me.

'Shit… '

Jung Ha-Yan wasn't doing anything threatening, but I could only pray that she wouldn't antagonize Cha Hee-Ra. However, her behavior was kind of strange, and although I couldn't describe it in words, it was as if she was trying to climb up to Cha Hee-Ra's level. Of course, Cha Hee-Ra wasn't Jung Ha-Yan's superior, but it's true that she had the upper hand. The red-haired man woman was the only anger management disorder therapist in Lindel, and the treatment was effective for Jung Ha-Yan in many ways. Since there was a gap that couldn't be filled between them, Jung Ha-Yan chose to bow first, but the reason why she suddenly started behaving this way was simple…

'Her magic stat has reached 99.'

She believed she was stronger now…

'Is this the animal kingdom or something?'

When Jung Ha-Yan was done sizing Cha Hee-Ra up, she immediately started rebelling when she thought that she could go up against the latter. You could say it was a small struggle that started from within Jung Ha-Yan. Maybe she was ruminating about the revolution that happened in the Holy Empire, but she was like a young challenger standing up against a male hogging all the females. Naturally, I thought they would get into an intense physical fight.

Although the genders were switched, I was undeniably in the same situation as what I had just described, and it was ridiculous to see them carefully conversing in this situation that was becoming more and more uncomfortable. I was sure that if these two weren't related to me in any way, they would have already left, just like Han

Sora, who was now standing far away.

“What did you say?” Cha Hee-Ra questioned.

“Oppa… s-seems uncomfortable… T-That’s all…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“…”

“…”

“I think there’s a different reason…” Cha Hee-Ra pointed out.

“Y-You’re… misunderstanding it…” Jung Ha-Yan replied.

“…”

“…”

“Bullshit…” Cha Hee-Ra remarked.

“I-It’s true… I’m telling the truth. There’s really no other reason. As I said, oppa just looked u-uncomfortable…” Jung Ha-Yan repeated.

“Hey, do I look like an idiot to you?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

The atmosphere instantly changed, and I thought about stepping in, but Cha Hee-Ra blocked me as if she were telling me to stay quiet.

Cha Hee-Ra immediately walked toward Jung Ha-Yan. Due to the slight difference between their height, Cha Hee-Ra was looking down at Jung Ha-Yan while Jung Ha-Yan was looking up, and the way Jung Ha-Yan looked up at Cha Hee-Ra without fear was pretty clear.

“You do realize that you’re starting to annoy me, right?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“I don’t know…” Jung Ha-Yan mumbled.

“…”

“…”

“Now you’re talking casually to me.” Cha Hee-Ra pointed out.

“I don’t know, ma’am…” Jung Ha-Yan corrected.

“But why are you looking up at me like that?” Cha Hee-Ra questioned.

“I don’t understand what you’re talking about. I-I’m looking at you like how I usually do… Y-You’re the one looking at me in a disgusting way, unnie… Y-You don’t like me, right?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“…”

“You must be out of your mind,” Cha Hee-Ra commented.

“…”

“I think I know why you’re talking all this nonsense, but if you don’t want to die, you better look down,” Cha Hee-Ra threatened.

“What?” Jung Ha-Yan muttered.

“I’m not going to repeat myself, little girl. If you don’t want me to twist that pretty head of yours, you better look down,” Cha Hee-Ra ordered.

The situation had been suffocating up until now, but I suddenly felt like something was stuck in my throat. Cha Hee-Ra mustered her energy and threatened Jung Ha-Yan. It didn’t matter whether that energy was her killing intent, mana, or whatever—all I could think about was leaving this place. Since I could feel Cha Hee-Ra’s energy all the way from where she was standing, I couldn’t even imagine how oppressed Jung Ha-Yan had to be feeling right now.

‘Shit… ’

Naturally, I used Mind’s Eye to look at Cha Hee-Ra, and I noticed her intelligence stat decreasing little by little while her strength stat was increasing. This meant she was using her unique habit, which increased her strength but decreased her intelligence.

I unknowingly started moving before I could feel like a fight would break out. I thought that Cha Hee-Ra was the reasonable one, but when I recalled her titles: Madwoman Crazy About Blood and the Holy Empire’s Red Madwoman, I realized

that her nature was nowhere near reasonable. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that her leadership positions had been helping her cosplay as a normal person. However, if I had to describe Cha Hee-Ra, I would say she was a lioness who had voluntarily restricted herself with an iron ball and chain, as well as a rabid dog who had been suppressing her temper.

Basically, a young challenger was making her lose her temper.

'Stop it, Ha-Yan… '

There was a reason why Cha Hee-Ra had been reigning over Lindel as the queen for several years and counting.

I had an inkling about what Jung Ha-Yan was thinking right now. Her magic stat was 99, and she had grown beyond comparison. I was sure those considered strong, like Galoshik of Garosh, Cash, and Lim Ri-Dan, were no match for her, but it was a different story when it came to Cha Hee-Ra.

'Her strength is 98… '

Moreover, Cha Hee-Ra could move points from her intelligence stat to her strength stat.

'Her strength is at 101… 103… 106… '

Cha Hee-Ra's strength continued to increase as her intelligence decreased. I was worried that the incident from last time would happen again, but I couldn't help but look forward to what Jung Ha-Yan was going to do. If Jung Ha-Yan was wearing the Scouter in Dragonball, I was sure she would be shocked to see Cha Hee-Ra's strength steadily increasing. Actually, even without an item like that, I was sure she could feel it.

Cha Hee-Ra bit her lips, and her eyes were filled with spite, making her look even angrier. It felt like this was going to turn into a bloody battle rather than a catfight. Jung Ha-Yan had indirectly challenged her, and the red-haired madwoman was trying to oppress the new challenger. I was sure that if Jung Ha-Yan and I weren't related in any way, something would have already happened.

'Does she think she's stronger than Cha Hee-Ra?'

Jung Ha-Yan may have thought she had a chance, but that wasn't the case. I didn't question the fact that Jung Ha-Yan was strong, and I believed that she had a chance against Cha Hee-Ra, but the reality was that there was a difference in their experience.

'Cha Hee-Ra is much stronger than she thinks… '

That was even more true because Cha Hee-Ra wasn't wielding a weapon, even though her class was Mercenary Queen.

"…"

"…"

After some time passed, one side backed down, and the winner of this war of nerves was obviously the red-haired madwoman. Jung Ha-Yan obeyed and started lowering her head.

'Yeah… just do as she says.'

Still, she had to have wanted to maintain her pride because she looked away. Jung Ha-Yan started crying, and her hands were shaking as if she had been wronged. She had to be feeling this way because when she believed the world finally belonged to her, the wall she thought she could already overcome was blocking her path again.

"*Kghhhh…*"

"If you acted like this from the start, it wouldn't have been awkward between us. I told you when we first met…" Cha Hee-Ra started.

"*Hiccup*…"

"I don't remember exactly what I said, but… I think I told you to learn how to suppress that bloodthirstiness of yours. Right, darling? I'll teach you one more thing today, little sis," she continued.

"*Hiccup*…"

"If you're not sure, don't even try. Don't challenge people, do you understand?"

The situation ended with her patting Jung Ha-Yan's shoulder, and although it quickly ended, it felt like a long time had passed to the point that my shirt was now wet from my sweat.

Cha Hee-Ra patted Jung Ha-Yan's head as if nothing had happened, but if the challenger thought the same, she wouldn't have overreacted and cried like that. Jung Ha-Yan reacted that way because she felt threatened.

"Come talk to her, darling. You can comfort her and explain so she understands…" Cha Hee-Ra requested.

"*Ah*, okay, noona," I replied.

"I'm saying this ahead of time just in case, but if something like this happens again, I won't go easy. Do you understand?" Cha Hee-Ra warned.

I completely understood. The atmosphere was a bit heavy for it to be considered a war of nerves, but I was sure she had considered the possibility of another incident breaking out later.

Cha Hee-Ra had acknowledged Jung Ha-Yan's growth, and she was taking the latter's growth into account.

'I'm sure of it.'

If the two were overtaken by their emotions, I could end up in a situation where there would be nothing I could do.

'Do we need to film an episode of Please Become Close?'[1]

No matter how much I thought about it, that was impossible.

Anyway, after saying that her mood was ruined, Cha Hee-Ra got in the carriage while Jung Ha-Yan was trying to read my expression, afraid that I would scold her, but to be honest, she was trying to look innocent.

When I waved to Jung Ha-Yan, she ran toward me and even though she continued hiccuping and sniffling, I didn't really know what to say to her. It wasn't like she cursed at Cha Hee-Ra or directly started a fight, and aside from the fact that she had been kind of rude, there weren't any other issues. Actually, the way Cha Hee-Ra

treated her had been a bit excessive. Of course, the situation would change when taking into account the hidden meaning behind her words, but it was difficult for me to fix this situation.

'I have to deal with this first.'

Naturally, I considered the fact that Jung Ha-Yan had a lot to complain about, but I had to stop her from creating conflict with Cha Hee-Ra during this trip; no, even after the trip. I couldn't let her think that I cared about Cha Hee-Ra more than her, so I had to use the carrot and whip appropriately.

When I looked at Jung Ha-Yan after sending Park Deok-Gu and the scared Han Sora into the carriage, she looked at me as if she was telling me, *"I'm sad right now. Can you hug me?"*

I had to scold her first, then I would hug her.

'I'm jealous of Kim Hyun-Sung. Shit… '

What he was going through was incomparable to what I was going through. I even witnessed Jo Hye-Jin, the kid, and even Park Yeon-Joo eating and shopping together while laughing. I was certain that the women around me would never do something like that, even in my dreams.

'They would backstab each other if they could… '

The more I thought about it, the more envious I became of Kim Hyun-Sung.

'I'm sure he saved a country in his past life… '

And I had definitely sinned a lot in my past life.

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1. There was an episode of a Korean variety show called "Infinite Challenge" where two awkward members of the show spent time together without the rest of the members ☜

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